THE PATRIARCHS

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Being Meditations

UPON

ENOCH, NOAH, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, JOSEPH, JOB;
THE CANTICLES, HEAVEN AND EARTH.

BY

J. G. BELLETT.

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ENOCH.

It is not so much of Enoch himself that I now purpose, in the Lord's grace, I would hope, to write a little, but rather of the times and the saints before the flood. Whether it be of them or of him, the materials, as we know, are very scanty; but in the way and wisdom of the Spirit of God, they are full of meaning and of value.

A peculiar attraction has been commonly felt in the Book of Genesis.

The simplicity of the narratives has to account for much of this, I doubt not. Human life is in its infancy and artlessness. The scenes are domestic, and the habits and manners such as family duties and affections were forming. This is a great source of enjoyment to the mind from this book. Such springs of pleasure are at times tasted in spite of ourselves. We are spoiled very much by the customs of the world, and we suppose that we like them. But still we find ourselves naturally at ease in such scenery as that which this lovely book presents to us. The wife of one wealthy lord, who numbered his servants by hundreds, and his flocks by thousands, would knead the cake for the traveller; and the daughter of another,

without practising the language of apology, would be seen by strangers watering the family herds.

Yet with all this there was the truest courtesy. The honour due to all men was as well understood as the love of kindred. It was not barbaric life, though simple and inartificial. It was not rude simplicity; but that which came from an influence that could mould and adorn life. And that influence was the knowledge of God. The times of this book were, as we know they were, unindebted to the advance of civility, or the regulations of cultivated life; but still the state of things was not barbarous, just because there was the knowledge of God. The hand of God was felt, while as yet the conceits of polished life had not time or liberty either to garnish or soil the scene.

It is this which fashions the manners of these early times. Peculiar they are, deeply commending themselves to a right mind; but enough, perhaps, to provoke the smile of many who belong to times like ours. For strange nowadays would be the confidential friendship of a master and his servant. And yet such was between Abraham and Eliezer, though all the while the duties and rights of the relationship were religiously observed. And how unwarrantable would it now be judged, that the intended husband of one of the daughters, or the son-in-law himself, as in the case of Laban and Jacob, should tend the family flocks in the heat of day and frost of night, getting his wages! And yet in all this there is no moral offence whatever; nothing but what may charm the nicest sensibilities of our nature.

But that which ought to lend this book its principal power to engage us is this: the Lord Himself is seen in it in ways and characters suited to this simple and primitive style. The action of the book being very much domestic, plain and unadorned, His way is according. Whether He communicates His mind, or manifests His presence, it is after this same pattern. He does not employ prophets, but personally makes His pleasure known. It may be in a dream, or with a voice, as well as by personal manifestation; but still it is *Himself*. And even if angels are employed, they are rather His *companions* than His *messengers*.

In the cool of the day, or the afternoon, He walked in the garden. In the field He pleaded with Cain, *personally* pleaded with him, adding the weight and authority of His own presence to a moment of awful and solemn interest. He came down at the cry of Babel, and the cry of the sin of Sodom, just that He might see, as we would do, whether things were really as bad as they were said to be. In forms of intimacy He again and again appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; inviting confidence, expressing displeasure, or conveying His purpose, in ways of full personal familiarity. And though, in the progress of the book, this style may grow a little slack, still it is maintained in measure to the end, even where we might have least expected it. For to kings, not of the stock of Abraham, the Lord God appeared in dreams by night, and, without amazement, warned them

of their duty, or told them of their danger.

The ministry of prophets, as I observed, is not employed. That would have been too distant, too reserved, to suit the general style. Nor is the divine pleasure communicated through the Holy Ghost, or by inspiration. That is not the way either--not the *usual* way. But it is, as we have seen, the personal interference of the Lord Himself, coming in a vision, or by a dream or a word; or in the still nearer way of taking the forms and attributes of manhood; and that, too, not in mystic dress, as afterwards to such as Isaiah, Daniel, or John; but as one who was meeting man in his place and circumstances. As a traveller, needing hospitality, He eats of a calf and a cake at the tent door with one; with another He contends and wrestles, as a man with his fellow, having a quarrel or matter of dispute with him.

See all this style of action in the case of Noah. How interestedly does the Lord God enter into the whole state of things in that day! Just as we all feel, His eye affects His heart. And then, just as we all do, He takes counsel with Himself. He saw the wickedness of man that it was great; it grieved Him to the heart; and then He said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." And after all this, just as we ourselves would do, having taken His counsel, He communicates it to a friend, passing it to the ear, and the heart, and the sympathies of another.

It was *thus* that the Lord dealt with Noah. He dealt with him as a man with his friend, as well as like God with an elect sinner. And we ourselves practise these ways. We love these confidences of friendship. We love a second self. "The end of all flesh is come before Me," says the Lord to Noah, telling him what had been passing in His own bosom. And afterwards, in the day of the waters, in the same way of gracious friendship, when the ark was about to float upon the scene of the judgment, "the Lord shut him in." With His own hand He did it.

Here was intimacy. Here was living, palpable nearness of the Lord God to His creature. And this is in character with His general actings and communications in this book. The glory was not as yet taking its place in a dispensation, shrouded in a cloudy chariot, or seated between cherubim. In all that there was majesty and conscious greatness, and the distance of holiness, as suited an ordered economy. But in the times of Genesis this was not so. Things were informal, and the action was desultory; and the Lord was in person, as the occasion demanded, according to this.

In this manner do we find the action of this beautiful book. The elect of God are thus, and thus is the living God Himself. It is as divine as anything else in the Word. And the soul so receives it. And good reason have we for blessing the Lord, because He has introduced our hearts to such a book as this. For we are not always ready for the higher things. We cannot at all times reach them, or obey

a summons to ascend the heavenly places. But the Spirit of God is tender of our weakness, and has provided for it. The Scriptures, if I may take leave to speak in a figure, have change of air and change of scene for our souls.

It is relish and appetite we have to covet, beloved--a holy delight in the things of God, whether they be the things of the "children" or of the "fathers;" the pure milk or the strong meat. *Little* ones in His school are still *living* ones. That is the blessed thing. He who liveth in the mere power of intellect, or in the schools of men, is dead while he liveth.

There is, however, another thing to be said on the times and on the Book of Genesis.

In those times, or, as the apostle speaks, "from Adam to Moses," *law* did not give character to the state of the people of God. Adam was under law in Eden, and so were the children of Israel after the day of Mount Sinai. But not so the generations from Adam to Moses. Sin was equally in the world, but there was no law. Rom. v. 14.

But not only, I may observe, were they not under law; there was also almost a total absence of moral or preceptive instruction. Much revelation of the divine pleasure and counsels there was; but scarcely anything of precept. Under the Spirit, revelation worked its result on character and conduct, and formed the mind and the ways of the saints. Evil was resented by them, and judged of God; but without a written standard of right and wrong. Without any law against murder, Cain is exposed; without a fifth commandment, Ham's dishonour of his father is punished. And so Jacob's guile is visited and resented by the Lord; and the wicked way of Joseph's brethren. And without the light of any precept the soul of a saint can thus plead with temptation, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

All this is so, though neither law nor moral instruction was then published. It was revelation in matters of faith which, under the Spirit, formed patriarchal character. Abraham was not enjoined either his altar or his tent; but his call of God, through the Spirit, suggested both. No precept required his high, generous treatment of Lot; but his faith and hope in God dictated and commanded it. Without direction on the case, his knowledge of God and the mind of Christ that was in him disposed him, and taught him to let the potsherds of the earth strive with their fellows, but as soon as his kinsman was a captive to go forth for his deliverance. No word, no oracle from God, distinguished for him between the king of Salem and the king of Sodom; but the light that was in him did.

I might go through other histories in this book, and find these same things. The holy judgment of the mind that was in them, under the Spirit, suggested to

those early saints conduct by means of revelation, promise, and calling of God. And this is ever beautiful, when we get genuine samples or instances of it.

Such then are among the characteristics of this earliest and infant age of our history, and of the precious book which records it. And this earliest method in the way of the Lord is to be the last and the abiding method. In Genesis, as we have seen, the Lord God acted "in the human guise," being personally present in the scene, and seeking the nearest intimacy with His creature. And this is to be the eternal thing when dispensations are over. God in manhood is to be for ever!

Precious mystery! Unfathomable wonder! Blessed to ponder this. The first is to be the last. The song of salvation--the "song of Moses"--was the first breath of the ransomed tribes. It was sung on the banks of the Red Sea, just as they had got beyond the reach of Pharaoh. After experiences were different. They had then to do with themselves. But at first the victory of the divine "man of war" was everything to them. And this first thing is to be the eternal thing. The song of Moses is to fill the courts of glory. Exodus xv.; Rev. xv. And so in earliest days, in Genesis days, the divine presence was not deemed strange, or something which did not suit the earth, or belong to man. The divine courtesies were then, so to speak, freely given, and unsuspectingly received. And so at the end, in days of millennial heavens and earth, the Lord God will be personally again in the scene.

The first five chapters of this book give us an account of antediluvian times, or, as they have been called, "the world before the flood." And it is those chapters I now purpose to look at a little particularly.

The whole opens, as of course, with the work of creation. I speak not particularly of this. But, instructed by the apostle, we may say that it is only *faith* which deals justly with this great work. Faith puts God above all the things that were made, or are seen. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Faith treats God worthily--the only principle in the soul which does so. He dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto." Faith owns this. The wisdom of men busies itself in seeing or inspecting Him. But though He will "show" great things of Himself, yet does faith know that no man hath seen or can see Him. 1 Tim. vi. It enjoys all His manifestations; but inspects not His dwelling-place in light.

The second chapter exhibits the man made in the image of God, in his estate in the garden of Eden. All there was tributary to him, all was for him. He had food for all the faculties and desires of his nature, and provision of all desirable

things. He was made, however, to *impart* as well as to receive; and that is ever a necessary feature in the happiness of a well-ordered mind. He was important to the garden, as the garden was important to him. He had "to dress it and to keep it." And he saw his dwelling-place the spring-head of a fruitful river, which went forth with life and refreshing to the whole earth. With all this the voice of a Sovereign was heard. A command went forth. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." But this was no trespass, no discordant note on the ear of Adam. God will not, and cannot, give His glory to another. And a creature of a right thought, "made upright," as Adam was, must delight in having it so. All this was therefore only harmonious and consistent happiness.

To perfect his condition the Lord God celebrates for him a coronation day, and a day of espousals. But this action has an order in it. The Lord takes counsel with Himself about Adam's espousals. This is done *first.* Then He introduces him to the scene of his sovereignty. He brings the creatures of the field and of the air to Adam, to see what he would call them, and whatsoever he called every living creature, that was the name thereof. This was investing him with dominion, setting the crown royal on his head. Then He prepares the help-meet, and presents Eve to him, following his coronation with his marriage.

This is the order of these events--an order which has a sacred and interesting sense in it. It is not the mere progress of independent facts. It is the design, so to speak, of a great master. For there is, as we now know, a mystery which had been "hid in God," "purposed in Himself," before the foundation of the world, His secret (Eph. iii.), of which this marriage in the garden of Eden was the type. Eph. v. And according to this the Lord, in the solitude of His own presence, in the musings of His own bosom, ere He led forth Adam into his kingdom, prepares his help-meet for him.

This, however, is not merely the *design of a great master*, but the *well-known way of a perfect love.*

The *richest* purpose of joy is the *first* in counsel.

The Lord's earliest thought was about Adam's best blessing. The help-meet at his side, the one like unto him, his companion, was destined to be more to him than all beside. And that which was chief in his enjoyments was the earliest and deepest thought in the mind of his Lord. His Lord pondered it. He spoke of it to Himself. His coronation was taken in hand at once and disposed of; but the getting of his help-meet for him was counselled and talked of beforehand.

This is the way that love would take. We know it ourselves. We like to dwell in thought over the materials of the happiness of one we love. So that all this is sweet and important to our hearts; for we read in it that which may again draw out the admiration and the worship, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!"

And Adam at once owns all this. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," he says, as he received the woman from the hand of the Lord God, owning that all was now complete. The serpent may by-and-by insinuate it to be otherwise. But he is a liar. There is not a flaw in all this estate. No lack, and no exception. Nothing that did not in its way contribute to bless him; and nothing of creature blessedness that was wanting to him.

But all this is at once envied by the great enemy. And he had title to try the stability of it. The nakedness, the unshamed nakedness, of the man and the woman was innocency. Yes, but it was also *exposure*. The creature was to be proved. Strength of creaturehood was to be tried. And the enemy had title to enter the garden to carry on the trial. He was no trespasser there. The order and purpose of creation made room for him, as well as for Adam himself. The very instrument by which he was to conduct his designs was there already. The tree of knowledge was in the midst of the garden.

The tempter, this serpent that was "more subtil than any beast of the field," was the devil. This is directly told us. Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2. And the scene around us to this hour tells of his victory. "The present evil world," whether in its moral condition or in its circumstances, we get in this chapter iii. And we might have expected this; for the world as it now is has derived itself out of the apostasy of Adam; its character and condition are formed by that great act of rebellion.

The three master-principles which animate "the course" of it--"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"--are here seen to become the springs of moral action in the heart of the woman, as soon as she listened to the devil; for the soul that gives up God must find out other masters, and other resources. And this is the world. The world has no confidence in God, nothing to bind it to Him, nothing to give it rest in Him, no sense of His love and truth. Such has it been since this hour, when man gave ear to the accuser of God. It has therefore found out other objects. God made man upright; but he has sought out many inventions. Eccles. vii. 29.

Conscience, too, is quickened into being. Sin did this. "They knew that they were naked." And it was then, at the hour of its birth, as it is to this hour, an *uneasy* conscience, a conscience that makes cowards of all who carry it. "I was afraid," says Adam (unable to look at God), "because I was naked." Conscience in man must be of this quality, for it owes its existence to sin. There was no sense of good and evil in him till he sinned; and this sense, thus acquired, must leave him a coward in the presence of the *righteous* One.

Instinctively they make themselves aprons. This is our doing still. Our common state of guilt makes us shun even our fellow-creatures. We cannot stand inspection even from them. One great and constant effort, in the scene around us

every day, is to escape *full* notice. The apron is still invented. The social system understands and allows this. Indeed, it is maintained by a common consent of this sort. And religion, in its way and measure, as well as the rules and common understanding of society, helps in all this. But "the presence of the Lord God" is a different element from that of the presence of our fellows. No rules which sustain the social system will make that tolerable for a moment. The clothing and the ceremony, the inventions of society, or the good manners that array and adorn it, will be found vanity. All have come short of *His* glory. Let but the conscience hear the tread of His foot, or the sound of His voice in the garden, and no attempt will be equal to that moment. Even religious inventions will all be vain. They can give no confidence with God, nor turn the current of the heart. With his apron upon him, Adam hides himself among the trees of the garden.

This teaches holy and solemn lessons. But with all this cowardice there is effrontery. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree." Man lays the mischief down at God's door. He says in effect, "Let God see to it; for the woman is His creature, and He gave her to me;" as he still, in the spirit of his mind, says, "Let God see to it; for the world is His, and He made it." A strange and horrible union! The insolence of the heart charging God, and yet a coward conscience unable to meet Him. The sinner may talk big, and make a noise; he may reason upon God and his own condition, and frame speeches and arguments as well as aprons; but in spite of all he can surround himself with, there he is, like Adam, ashamed of himself, and afraid of God. Man has wronged the blessed God, and avoids Him. He charges Him, and yet is afraid to look in His face while he does so. All this, in spite of himself, witnesses against him. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," the Lord has but to say. And then, as again in the parable, he must be speechless.

Such was the mind of Adam then, and such is human nature still. But if this were his moral condition, what were his circumstances? Just those of man to this hour also. By the sweat of his face he was to get bread, and in the sorrow of his heart to eat of it; and that too in the place of thorns and thistles. And in like sorrow the woman was to bring forth children; and all this till they both returned to the dust, out of which they had been taken. And man is still after this manner, outside the garden, conversant with toil and sorrow. Dressing and keeping a lovely surface and a fruitful soil is not the thing or the allotment now. Thorns and thistles and an unkindly reluctant ground are to be contended with, and life to be had by the sweat of the face in the contest.

God alone is above this water-flood, able to manage this mighty catastrophe. And His supremacy is such that He will make even such an eater yield meat, and get sweetness out of even this strong one.

In a glorious sense, however, redemption is far more than remedy of a mis-

chief, or relief, even with advantage, for an injured, ruined creation. Creation, rather, is the servant of redemption; for "redemption is no afterthought." For the pleasure of Him who sits upon the throne all things are and were created. But that very throne has *the rainbow round about it* (Rev. iv.), the sign of covenant faithfulness, and that all things were to stand *in redemption*, or in the value of the blood of Jesus. So that when sin entered, the Lord God was at once prepared for it (I speak as a man); prepared to meet it by covenant arrangements made before the world began, as His very first word to the serpent tells us, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Here the great way of God opens upon us. This promised Seed of the woman, here revealed, is *God's provision for dead and ruined man*, in the face of all the malice and wrath of the enemy. And He is this *at all personal cost*; for the serpent was to bruise His heel. But though bruised, *He was to achieve a glorious victory*; for He was to bruise the serpent's head.

These are the holy, august characters of this mysterious stranger--this promised Deliverer or Kinsman. Such was the truth revealed on the first moment of our sin, and such has been the truth ever since. This gospel, published in the first promise in the face of the devil himself, is maintained in these last days by the apostle, in the face of men on earth and angels in heaven. Gal. i. 8. Whether it be the earliest or the latest preaching of it, this glorious gospel is still the same. It is "the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son." It is the gospel of the bruised and yet victorious Seed of the woman. In the bright and perfect idea of it man is silent and passive. Abram had only to *believe*, and righteousness was imputed to him. Israel had but to *stand by* and see God's salvation. Joshua in Zechariah iii., the prodigal, the convicted adulteress, are all in like case. And here, at the beginning of our sin, and the beginning of God's gospel, it is just the same. Adam has only to *listen*, and through hearing to believe and live. The word is nigh us, and we have but to receive it without working anything in the heights above, or in the depths beneath. The *activities* are God's; the *sacrifices* are God's. The profoundness of our silence and passiveness in *becoming* righteousness is only equalled by the greatness of the divine activity and sacrifice in *acquiring* righteousness for us. In the sight of such a mystery we may well stand and say, "What hath God wrought!" "Simple indeed it is to us," as one once said, "but it cost *Him* everything."

There is nothing in the heart of man like faith in this gospel. The faith of a poor sinner in the redeeming grace of God is the most beautiful condition the soul can be in. As saints, beloved, we may trust God for our need. We may look to Him for counsel, or for provision. We may trust Him to vindicate our doings, comfort us in sorrow, and strengthen us in difficulties. But the faith of a sinner, in the

justifying grace and work of His divine Saviour, transcends them all. Nothing is so precious, for nothing apprehends God in so glorious a character, or gives Him to the soul in so wondrous a relationship. This faith it is which uses the richest resources in God, and acts upon the most blessed discoveries of Him. For while all the ways of His glory shine brightly--His strength, and comfort, and wisdom for His needy saints--yet, that He has grace and salvation for sinners, this excelleth them all.

The Spirit of God, in these early times, gives us some most precious samples of this most precious faith; as though (may I say it?) delighting in such a thing, He produced an impression of the finest character *at once*, as soon as occasion served.

Thus Adam, in his faith, talked only of life, though in the midst of death--death, which he himself had brought in, a standing witness against him. He was doomed to be an outcast in a scene of ruin which his own sin had produced. He knew this and allowed it. But he had listened to the story of the conflict between his destroyer and the woman's Seed. In the very place of judgment--from among the trees of the garden, where conscience had driven him--his ear had caught the sound of the sweet gospel, not of mercy merely, but propitiation and victory, and forth he comes, talking of life. He called his wife "Eve," the mother of all living. All life was in the promised Kinsman-Redeemer. In creation Adam himself had been constituted head of life--"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth;" but that, in his esteem, was now forfeited and gone. Life must flow in a new channel--"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

How grand in its very simplicity all this was! And there was recovery also of *moral* glory, in a great sense, in all this. Adam had not *submitted* himself to the *majesty* of God, but affected to be as God. But now he does *submit* himself to the *righteousness* of God. His shoulders bowed themselves to receive the covering wrought for his nakedness by God's own hand. See Rom. x. 3. He was now honouring God the Redeemer, though he had just before been doing all he could to dishonour God the Creator--so simply was he led by the Spirit to value the divine provision for a sinner in the promise of our bruised but victorious Kinsman.

In like manner, Eve. She had listened to the same promise, and therefore, as soon as she had brought forth her first-born, she gives witness that this promise lived chief in the thoughts of her heart. "I have gotten a man from the Lord," said she. She as much overlooked herself as Adam did. She gloried only in her Seed. She had listened to the promise with too faithful an ear to mistake herself for her Seed. It was not over herself, but over him, that she now, in the language of another mother, was singing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!" There was a mistake here, it is true. But there

was witness how the object of faith filled her visions, and the expectations of faith stirred in her heart. And so soon as disastrous events manifest her mistake, and prove to her that this first-born of her womb was anything rather than the promised Seed--that instead of being the bruiser of the serpent's head, he turned out to be the murderer of his brother--still is she found on the rock where faith had fixed her soul. "Let God be true, but every man a liar," was her triumph. Over Seth she exclaims, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Though every cistern fail, she knows the fountain cannot. One son had been a murderer, and another his victim; but still God is true. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord *for ever*; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

Precious faith, we may say, "like precious faith," with Adam, and with us, beloved. So Abel. Faith in him had respect to the same promise, the same gospel. The word had spoken of a *bruised* Deliverer; and accordingly it is a victim, a bruised or bloody sacrifice, he lays on God's altar. But not only so. He brings the *fat* of the victim likewise. He knows the delight which God Himself takes in the provisions of His own grace. He knows that He is pleased with the work of His own hand. He understands that God is a cheerful giver, that there is no grudging in the gift of grace. In spirit he hears the music which the Father's command has awakened in His own house over His returned prodigal. In the delight with which God Himself had clothed the naked sinner with coats which His own hand had willingly wrought (a happier task than even the six days of creation), the faith of Abel seems to glory. And as thus the richest joy that is felt in all the costly mystery of redemption is felt by God Himself, he lays the richest part of the victim, the fat of the animal, on the altar, making *that* the Lord's own portion in this feast of love and joy, in His own house, and at His own table.

This was another most excellent sample of a sinner's faith. Abel, in spirit, was in Luke xv.--that chapter which tells us that the Lord's own joy in it may account for the gospel. And all these are *pattern* works of the Spirit, forming the faith of sinners. There is no questioning of God's grace, no uneasy reflections on creature-worthlessness, though there was plenty of cause for that. The strength, the liberty, the triumph of the promise live in their souls.

And let me add, that if the confession of Lamech (chapter iv. 23, 24) be the utterance of a convicted believing sinner (as I believe it is), it is only another equally fine expression of this same early and excellent faith. It is of an order worthy to stand with that of Adam, or of Eve, or of Abel; fervent, strong, unquestioning, and full of liberty.

God's word to Cain had revealed a great truth--that He, and He *alone*, has to do with a sinner. Others, like Abel, may suffer; but all sin is directly done against God, and He asserts His title to deal with it alone. "Whosoever slayeth Cain [the

Lord therefore says], vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."

This great truth, so unspeakably precious to faith, Lamech seems to have received and fed upon, until his whole soul triumphed in it. Not merely *preservation* from man, like Cain, does he count upon, but *salvation*, "the salvation of God." Learning that as a sinner he was *alone* with God, he takes that place, and there discovers how God can deal with him, even in the security and provisions of grace; and that discovery is the light in which his soul at once walks. Like Job, afterwards, he publishes his confession far and wide. "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech," he says; "hearken unto my speech." Then in true gospel intelligence he magnifies sin, and owns that it was his destruction. "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." But then again, in true gospel simplicity, he much more magnifies grace. "If Cain be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." In his thoughts, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." He is of the very mind and temper of Paul. His confidence and victory are apostolic. He seems to sing--

"I hear the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done;
I know them well, and thousands more--
Jehovah findeth none."

A glorious sight his faith takes of the whole mystery, and of the boundlessness and riches of grace. He listens to the provisions of grace (when alone with God), and the charging of the law, the accusings of Satan, the alarms of conscience, and the self-righteous reproaches of men, are not heard.[1]

These operations of the Spirit through the promise on the souls of sinners are truly beautiful. The apron of fig-leaves drops off, or is rather cast away, when such operations go on. It is found *unnecessary* now, as it was found *insufficient* before. And so all the inventions of men. They are the contrivances of the wrong-doer himself, the efforts of the creature, the devices of the sinner, and they can *therefore* never do. But they are as unnecessary as they are insufficient. The coat of skin, the work of God Himself, has made them so.

There is, however, something which this glorious relief provided for the

[1]I do not, however, assume that Lamech was a murderer; but he could identify himself with such. With Paul, he could, in the sense of what he was before God, speak of himself as chief of sinners. And we know also that the repentant Remnant of the latter day will, in their confession, quite take the place of blood-guiltiness after this manner. They will look to Him whom they pierced. They will, in the spirit of Daniel or Nehemiah, make themselves one with the guilty nation.

sinner does *not* accomplish. The thorns and the thistles of the cursed ground remain; and with them the sweat of the face, and the sorrow of the heart, and then the return of dust to dust. As to this hour. We shine in "the righteousness of God," adorned under His own eye, and by His own hand dressed for His presence; but all the while pressures and hindrances and sore grievances wait on the tilling of the earth; and pains bring us into the world, till we return to the dust from whence we came. Neither does this glorious provision of grace displace the cherubim. They accompany it rather. They are stationed at the eastern gate of the garden, with their flaming sword, to keep every way of the tree of life; and no promise which Adam had listened to, no covering which Adam had received, changes this. Man's capacity to regain that tree is gone, and gone for ever. Never will he be anything but a *saved sinner*, pass he along what paths of glory he may, from "paradise" to "the kingdom," from the kingdom to "the new heavens and the new earth." Eating of that tree is only by gift of Jesus, the woman's Seed of the first promise. Rev. ii. 7.

Such are among the mysteries taught us in this wonderful chapter, full of mysteries as it is, and of the profoundest secrets of God. But we have to come down for instruction to learn man and his ways, as well as to rise, as we learn God and His counsels.

Cain is declared by the Spirit of God in the apostle to have been "of that wicked one." The first thing we see in him is his religion. He renders to God, as offering or sacrifice, the fruit of the cursed ground, the produce of his own toil. But this was unbelief. It was the denial of all that had happened since the creation, the *religious* denial of it. It was the direct contradiction of the way of faith, or of Abel. Abel took the way of the promise to God, the bloody victory of the woman's Seed, the death and resurrection of Christ, and offered of his flock; but Cain refused to see man's ruin and God's redemption, giving God the fruit of the earth; in effect saying, that He was to be read and known in the thorns and the thistles, the sweat, and the sorrow, and the death; and by the solemn services of his altar he was denying all truth.

This was the way of a heart deeply departed from God. He was laying the scene of ruin at God's door, as Adam, ere he repented, had laid down the sin itself there.

His next way is in terrible keeping with all this. He hates his brother, being of that wicked one who is a murderer (John viii. 44), and in process of time he slays him.

Tremendous fruit of the apostate, departed nature. He was the first of that generation who delivered Jesus to be crucified--self-righteous and murderous. For envy the Jews delivered Jesus; and Cain slew Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. It is the world. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the

world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." The Lord pleaded with him. See iv. 6, 7. His heart had conceived the sin, but his hand had not brought forth fruit unto death; and with a voice of long-suffering grace and warning the Lord pleaded with him. The grace was despised; this grace of pleading with him at the last hour, as the grace of the promise had been despised before.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The light which the Lord Jesus was bringing with Him was the light of life or salvation. Isa. xlix. 6; John viii. 12. And *this* was the light which Cain hated and refused.

There is the light of righteousness or holiness. But the refusal of it is not without remedy. In that light the Lord God had come into the garden and called, "Adam, where art thou?" Adam could not stand it; for he had sinned. It was intolerable to him. He had come short of that glory. He retreats from it. And then the Lord God shines in another light. The promise is made. The character of the glory is changed. God seats Himself in a light which the sinner can approach, and, believing, Adam comes forth.

This was the light which Cain despised, the light of salvation, the light of the promise, the light in which God shines before men outside the garden. And Cain is therefore cursed as Adam had not been. As it is said of another generation, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

All this is the solemn history of the first unbeliever. But the treasury of corrupt nature that was in him spends itself in further ways of wickedness. In him was rising that spring which was to give out "its superfluity of naughtiness." He lies after all this, and justifies himself. "I know not," says he; "am I my brother's keeper?" For "the lusts of his father he would do;" and when the devil "speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

All this, however, and even more than this, was *man*, and not Cain merely. It was the ruined heart of man exposing itself. And because it was this, because it was the common nature that was thus disclosing itself, the Lord takes the judgment of it away from man. "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold;" for none are without sin. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." All are in the like condemnation. No one can take up the stone and cast it at another. And in order to express this great principle of truth, and that God alone has either title or competency to deal with sin, the Lord will not allow any man to touch the fratricide. By this divine writing on the case, all are to go out convicted, one by one, and leave the sinner with God. John viii.

For the ends of government, when government in the earth becomes the divine purpose, it shall be said, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. ix. 6. But this is not so as yet. And for the teaching of the common pravity, that all of us may be humbled by the common conviction, that "we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God," not one of the whole human family is allowed to touch this wicked Cain. And so to this day, when government has been divinely set up, it is not sin that it deals with. *Crimes*, or offences against public order, and *wrongs* done to individuals, may be judged by man; but to take vengeance on *sin* would be the assuming of personal guiltlessness. "He that is *without sin* among you, let *him* first cast a stone at her." God has to deal with sin *alone*.[2]

But, further, as to this awful history. Man will not always be making this terrible exhibition of himself. He will not at all times appear as the liar and the murderer. Legion will not be found on every journey we take. There are restraints. The law, in one sense, was given to that end. So there are the checks and improvements of education. And there is the control of God's hand, and the fear of His providence and judgment. And there is "the law of opinion," as it has been called, the verdict of society. These and the like influences produce an order in the social scene, which has therefore become not only tolerable, but full of vast accommodations and large entertainments. A new *scene* is thus produced, though not a new *creature*. Man is man still, the same creature in God's esteem, or in all divine reckoning, though he appears in the character of a respectable citizen of the world, and not as the murderer of his brother. Cain builds a city. He has a thriving, prosperous family. Through their skill and industry the face of the world flourishes and looks well. All is respectable; and pleasant and friendly the people are one with another. The murder is forgotten. Man does not hear the cry of blood, but the sound of the harp and the organ. His inventions have stifled his convictions. Cain is an honourable man. But as to the presence of God, he is as thoroughly separated from it as when his hand was freshly stained with the blood of his brother.

This is solemn. Man, as a respectable citizen of the world, may be as separated from God as a murderer. "The remnant of them," as the parable speaks,

[2]Some have spoken of the Jews, as guilty of the blood of Christ, so as to have betrayed the principle of self-righteousness condemned here. And yet I doubt not that there is a sense in which the Jews are--in a special sense--connected with that sin in the divine judgment. The land of the Jews is the distinguished field of blood; the blood of Jesus, in a great sense, is specially on them and their children. And so, like Cain, that people are under the special securities of God. And further; that blood is to be cleansed from off their land, though it now so stains it. Joel iii. 21.

And still further; the language of Lamech, I also judge, is mystical or typical, intimating the repentance of the Jews who shed the blood, after generations of unbelief and hardness of heart. See note, p. 20.

"took his servants ... and slew them." The remnant! a word which lets us know that the refusers of the supper were of *one* class with those who shed the blood of the innocent.

The ease and indifference with which Cain could turn his back upon the Lord, and upon the recollection of his brother's blood, are dreadful. He got a promise of security, and that was all he cared for. And quickly, under his hand, accommodations and delights of all sorts fill the scene.

In some sense this is principally shocking. This exceeds. But is not this the "course of the world"? Was it not man that slew Jesus? Does not the guilt of that deed lie at every man's door? And what is the course of the world but the ease and indifference of Cain in this highest state of guilt? The earth has borne the cross of Christ; and yet man can busy himself with garnishing and furnishing it, and making life in it convenient and pleasurable without God. This is shocking when we look at it in full divine light. A respectable citizen of the world Cain was, but all the while a heartless forgetter of the sorrows of Abel! His ease and respectability are the blackest features of his history. He went away as soon as he got a promise of security; and that promise he uses, not to soften his heart, and overwhelm him with convictions of all that had happened, but as giving him full occasion to indulge and magnify himself.

We read in the New Testament of "the way of Cain." It may be, nay, it is, run by others. Jude 11. And what a way does this chapter show it to be! He was an infidel, or a man of his own religion; not obedient in faith to God's revelation. He practised the works of the liar and the murderer; he hated the light; he was proof against God's word in mercy and in warning; he cares nothing for the presence of God which his sin had forfeited, or for the sorrow of his brother which his hand had inflicted. And, as such an one, he can take pains to make himself happy and honourable in the very place which thus witnessed against him.

Is this the "way of Cain"? Is this man still? Yes; and nature outlives a thousand restraints and improvements. For at the end of Christendom's career it will even then be said of a generation, "They have gone in the way of Cain."

This is deeply solemn, beloved, had we but hearts to feel it. There is, however, a rescued, separated people. Seth's family are after another order altogether. They are not seen in cities, furnished with accommodations and pleasures, apart, like Cain, "from the presence of the Lord;" but as the household of God, separated from that world that lay in the wicked one, to the faith and worship of His name.

It is the sight of this elect family that has principally at this time drawn me to this portion of the precious oracles of God. There is much, I believe, in their standing and testimony which has instruction for our souls. Like all else in these chapters,

it is but short notices we get; but great things are to be found in them.

This family of Seth may generally be thus spoken of: *They are strikingly opposed to the way of Cain, and remarkably apprehensive of the way of God.*

I speak not here again of their *faith*, but of their *standing and testimony*. Their faith, or the character of their religion, may be read in that of Adam, who re-appears here at the head of these antediluvian saints; and his faith (kindred with that of Eve and Abel, or of all who receive the gospel of the grace of God) I have already considered. But I speak now of their standing as a household of God, and of their testimony in the world.

The Lord had set a mark on Cain, that no one finding him should slay him. He would not have the blood of Abel avenged. This we have already seen.

The family of Seth are strictly observant of this. No attempt, or anything like it, is made by them to answer the cry of innocent blood. They know that it is heard in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; but, under this word of God, they are deaf to it themselves. Vengeance does not belong to them. The harvest has not come. They are not reapers. In obedience they heard, not the cry of blood, but the voice of the Lord countermanding vengeance. And they suffer it. They take the wrong done to their brother, and are acceptable with God.

Express charge demanded this, and this was consequently simple obedience. But the mind of a saint is full of light. It is the mind of Christ (1 Cor. ii.); in us, it is true, darkened in a thousand actings of it, by the coarseness and blindness of nature with which it is now linked; but still, in itself it is full of light. Even angelic nature is all life. Torpidity and dulness do not belong to it. "Winds" and "flames of fire" express that nature, and such things act constantly and fervently; and in like virtue the mind of Christ, the divine nature in the saint, is full of affection and intelligence.

We get some of its fine ways of acting in this household of God.

The innocent blood is to remain unavenged. Its cry from the earth is not to be answered, at least for the present. *That* is enough to teach the saint his pilgrim, heavenly calling. The family of Seth are therefore as pilgrims and strangers here, and all their habits are those of heavenly citizens. If the earth be not to be cleansed, the elect are to be strangers in it with a heavenly calling.

Beautifully true to the mind of God is this! For this is the way of God; and it was apprehended by these saints, more in the light and knowledge of His most perfect and beautiful ways than many of us, beloved, who, in the fuller revelations of this present age, have been so much nourished and instructed. But it is not the much schooling we get, but the capacity which sits at the lesson. David wanted capacity for this same lesson, when he talked of building a house of cedars, a fixed habitation, for the Lord, while the land was still defiled with blood. But the Lord (may I say?) would be, like the antediluvian saints, a stranger on the earth,

a dweller in tents, while blood was staining it; and that very night rebuked the purpose of the king of Israel. 1 Chron. xvii.

We have many exhibitions of this way of God in different forms of it. The Lord, for instance, would have no altar in Egypt, uncircumcised as that land was. He would not have a throne in the land (in the full glory of it) till the day of Solomon, when all was sanctified for His royal presence. Afterwards the glory was grieved away by the abominations which were done in the temple. The captives, in like spirit, hang their harps on the willows of the Euphrates; for how could they sing in a strange land, or let the songs of Zion be heard in Babylon? Separation was the rule of the divine mind. Separation was holiness. Pollution demanded it, and faith rose at the bidding. And with all this the Seth family, the household of God in earliest days--days before the flood--are in company. They are one in spirit with Jehovah Himself in Egypt, with the glory in the defiled temple, with the harps of the captives in Babylon, and with the Church of God in "this present evil world."

We have to distinguish between these two things: *God's assertion of His title to the earth, and God's call of a people out of the earth.*

These different things have been again and again exhibited in the progress of the dispensations. And they have been exhibited, as I have long judged, alternately.

The Lord began, in Adam, to claim and display His rights on the earth. The man in the garden was to own the sovereignty of God, and the earth was the rest and the delight of the Lord, and the place of His glory.

Sin entering and polluting all, and the pollution being left uncleansed, in Seth God called a people away from the earth to an inheritance in heaven.

Then in Noah the Lord God re-asserted His rights here, and took up the earth as the place where His elect might find a home, and His own presence be known again.

After this Abraham is separated from kindred, and from country, and from father's house, to be a heavenly stranger on the earth, with his altar and his tent, looking for a city whose builder and maker was God.

Israel, in their day, then take up this mystic tale of the heavens and the earth, and in the land of Canaan become the witness of the scene of God's sovereignty. The ark passes over the river as "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth."

And now the Church is set for the full testimony of heavenly mysteries again; and strangership here is the divine idea, till our being taken to meet the Lord in the air.

This wondrous tale these dispensations of God, like day and night alternate, have thus been telling from the beginning; and still are telling. And millennial

days ere long will make these pledges good, and be the glorious substance of these foreshadowings.[3]

Now let me observe, that whenever God arises in this progress of His counsels to *assert title to the earth*, He begins by judging and cleansing it. And this, I may say, *of course*; because, the scene of His purposed glory and presence being corrupted, He must take the offence away, for His presence could not brook defilement. Noah's lordship of the earth was, accordingly, preceded by the flood carrying away the world of the ungodly. Israel's inheritance of Canaan under Jehovah, as the God of all the earth, was prepared by the judgment of the Amorites and the sword of Joshua. And the future millennial kingdom, when the earth is to be the place of the glory again, is (as all Scripture tells us) to be ushered in by that great action called "the day of the Lord," with a clearing out of all that offend, and all that do iniquity.

But the *call of God* is quite of another character. It proceeds on the principle, that God Himself is apart from the earth, and is not seeking to have it as the home of His glory, or the place of His presence; but seeking a people out of it, to be His, away from it, and above it. The earth is altogether a stranger to such a purpose. It is left just as it is found. No judgment, no visitation of the scene here from the hand of God, accompanies it.

This was exhibited in Abraham. Abraham was the object of the call of God; and accordingly the Canaanites find no rival in him. He does not dispute with them the title or possession of the soil. He finds them, and he leaves them, lords of it. He desires only to pitch his tent and raise his altar on the surface of it for a season; and then, for another season, to have his bones laid in the bowels of it.

So with the Church in this age. She is likewise under the call of God. But her call leaves the Gentiles in power, as it found them. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." The saints have only to obey them unreluctantly, or to suffer from them patiently, according as the demand made by them is or is not consistent with their subjection to Christ and the call of God. They cannot strive with the potsherds of the earth. Peter's sword is to be put up, and Pilate is to learn that the servants of Jesus cannot fight. Their warfare is not with flesh and blood. They are defeated the moment they begin it. The call of God has marshalled the hosts of God against principalities and powers on high, and the battle is there. It does not connect us with the earth. Our *necessities* do, but not our *call*. We need the fruit of the ground, the toil of the hand, and the skill of the heart, to provide things needful for the body. Our necessities thus connect us with it, and we have to do with it for their supply; but our call separates us from it. Joshua went into

[3]Such passages as Eph. i. 10 and Col. i. 20 tell us that both the heavens and the earth are equally the scene of divine purposes. And the great argument in Rom. xi. instructs us about those purposes, and the ways and times of their accomplishment.

the possession of the Gentiles, that his sword might make it the possession of the Lord; Paul went into the places of the Gentiles, to take out of them a people unto God, linked with the disallowed Stone, despised and rejected of men.

The family of Seth were, in like manner, under this call of God. It was intimated to them by the charge to leave the blood of Abel unavenged, and they understood the intimation. If the earth be left in its defilement, God is not seeking it (as we have now seen all His ways declare), and this family of faith are in that secret. They will not seek it either. Cain's house was in possession of it, and Seth's family will leave them there, without a rival or a struggle. The mind of God in them took this knowledge of the way of God, and of His pleasure touching them; and they acted on heavenly principles in a blood-stained earth, whose judgment was now for a time to linger and to slumber.

I own, beloved, that I greatly admire this fine expression of the mind of Christ in these earliest saints. They take the only way which the holiness of God could sanction. They are "partakers of *His* holiness." The light they walked in was *God's*; the holiness they partook of was *God's*. 1 John i. 7; Heb. xii. 10. This is a peculiar thing. That light is not merely righteousness. It is the light of grace also. Yea, and the light of heavenly strangership in a polluted world. It is a light which reproves the course of this world, and makes manifest other principles and hopes altogether. There may be righteousness, and the watching and praying which escapes temptation; but there must be a walk according to these principles and hopes, to form a walk "in the light, as He is the light." These earliest believers beautifully shine there, I believe. They were not under law. They come between Adam and Moses. They had not precepts, as I have already shown. But they were in the light, as God is in the light. And if afterwards Abram did not need to be told to have his altar and his tent--if he needed no precept from the Lord how to order the marriage of his son, or how to answer the king of Sodom--so these saints of still earlier days understood the holiness of the call of God, and took their journey for a heavenly country at the bidding of the pollution of the earth.

I own indeed, again, that I greatly admire this. It is the beauty of the Spirit's workmanship in His elect vessels. All is His. "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" They learn the word in spirit ere the voice of the Spirit uttered it--"Arise, depart, for this is not your rest; it is polluted."

The details about these antediluvian believers are very scanty; but through it all there is this heavenly character. They do not supply history for the world; but they do supply instruction for the Church. This is heavenly. No spirit of burning or spirit of judgment had purged the blood of the earth, and they shrink instinctively from it. In the spirit of their minds they leave it. "What communion has light with darkness? what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" their conduct asks. Their *religion* is that of separation from the world, and

so are *their habits*.

They call on the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord is the revelation He has been pleased to make of Himself. Immanuel, Jesus, "the Lord our righteousness," Jehovah, God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost--these are among His names graciously and gloriously published by Himself. And "to call on the name of the Lord" was service or worship of God in spirit and in truth.

This was the religion of these earliest saints. It was simply the religion of faith and hope. They worshipped God, and, apart from the world, they waited in hope. "The work of faith" and "the patience of hope" are seen in them. Something of the Thessalonian spirit breathes in them. For they served the living and true God, and waited for the Son from heaven, who had already delivered them. 1 Thess. i. To "call on the name of the Lord" is faith, and salvation, and worship. It bespeaks the standing of a saint, and his spiritual service. It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Joel ii.; Rom. x. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. Psalm cxvi. And such was their religion, such was their worship. It was worship in spirit. No temples, or costly carnal services, or institutions of man appear.

And in their ways and habits they are only seen as a people walking across the surface of the earth, till their bodies are either laid under it, or are translated to heaven above it. They rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they buy, as though they possessed not; they have wives, as though they had none. All around them is as Babylon to them, and their harps are on the willows. Cain's family have all the music to themselves. But Seth's family are a risen people. Their conversation is in heaven. They look for no estates or cities. All they take is an earlier Machpelah. Nothing is told us of their place or their business. They are strangers where even Adam was once at home, and, much more, where Cain still was. We may follow them, and in spirit abide with them for a day; but where they dwelt we know not--like the disciples who followed the glorious Stranger from heaven in the day of His sojourn here. John i. 38, 39. They are without a place or a name. The earth knew them not. Like the stranger Rechabites, they are, throughout their generations, one after another, of the wilderness, and not of the city (Judges i. 16); or in Levitical language, they were a standing order of Nazarites, more separated to God than even Israel themselves.

They are the earliest witnesses of this heavenly strangership. Such a life is exhibited afterwards in other saints of God in its fuller, beautiful details; but we have it here in spirit.

For instance, in Isaac. The world was against him. But he strives not with it either in deed or in word. He neither answers nor resists. The Philistines tell him to go from them. He goes at their bidding. They spoil him of his labours. He

yields and takes it patiently, as Esek and Sitnah tell us. Gen. xxvi.

So his father Abraham before him. Only, sad to tell it, it is a *brother* who acts the part of the world in the scene. Lot chooses, as the world chooses, the well-watered plain. Abraham suffers, and takes it patiently--though it was something more galling than the wrong of a Philistine--the unthankful, selfish way of one who should have known better, and who owed him everything. Gen. xiii.

So Israel, in still later days, accepts the insult of Edom in like spirit. They pleaded for a passage through their land by the claims of kindred, by reason of their common origin, by their many toils and afflictions, by the tokens of the divine favour toward them, and by their present need as toiling, way-worn pilgrims through a desert land. But Edom despised them and threatened. They pleaded again, but they were insulted again; they suffered it, and took another road. Num. xx. And so their Lord in the day of His pilgrimage. He sought another village when other Edomites of Samaria refused Him. Luke ix. Precious and happy, thus to put Him at the head of all that is excellent! The good that is done is *like* Him, as well as *of* Him. Isaac suffers wrong from *the world*, and takes it patiently. Abraham suffers wrong from *one who owed him everything*, and takes it patiently. Israel suffers likewise from their *kindred*; but Jesus from those whom *He was serving and blessing at the cost of everything to Himself*, from the world which He had made, and from that people whom He had adopted. And yet "He lays His thunder by," and goes on His pilgrimage of love and service still.

In like spirit the family of God, in days before the flood pursue their pilgrim path. They leave the world to Cain. There is not the symptom of a struggle, nor the breath of a complaint. They say not, nor think of saying, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." In habits of life and principles of conduct, they are as distinct from their injurious brother as though they were of another race, or in another world. Cain's family make *all* the world's history. They build its cities, they promote its arts, they conduct its trade, they invent its pleasures and pastimes. But in all this Seth's family are not seen. The one generation call their cities after their own names; the other call themselves by the name of the Lord. The one do all they can to make the world their own, and not the Lord's; the other do all they can to shew themselves to be the Lord's, and not their own. Cain writes his own name on the earth; Seth writes the Lord's name on himself.

We may bless the Lord for this vigorous delineation of heavenly strangership on earth, and ask for grace to know some of its living power in our souls. It is this which has drawn me to this portion of the Word at this time. It reads us a lesson, beloved. And well indeed, if the instincts of our renewed minds suggest the same heavenly path with like certainty and clearness. The call of God leads that way, and all His teaching demands it. The pastimes and the purposes, the

interests and the pleasures, of the children of Cain are nothing to these pilgrims. They declare plainly that they refuse the thought, that there is any capacity in the earth, as it is now, to give them satisfaction. They are discontented with it, and make no attempts to have it otherwise. There lay their moral separation from the way of Cain and his household. They were not mindful of the country around them, but sought a better, that is, a heavenly.[4] May I not therefore say of them, as I have said, that they are strikingly opposed to the way of Cain, and remarkably apprehensive of the way of God?

After this pattern the Lord would have us: in the world, but not of it; of heaven, though not as yet (except in Christ) in it. Paul, in the Holy Ghost, would so have us, taking example from those whose "conversation is in heaven." Peter, in the same Spirit, would so have us "as strangers and pilgrims" abstaining from fleshly lusts. James summons us, in the same Spirit, to know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." And John separates us as by a stroke: "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

It is for the Church surely, beloved, to walk in this elevation and separateness. What is according to the call of God, and what worthy of heavenly hopes, but this? We breathe but feebly, and glow but faintly, in company with those and like witnesses. What a temper of soul, it has just struck me, we get in such a chapter as Phil. iv.! What a glow is felt throughout it! What depth and fervency of affection! What a shout of triumph the spirit raises! What elevation in the midst of changes, perplexities, and depressions! The apostle's whole temper of soul throughout that chapter is uncommon. But if one may speak for others, it is to us little more than the tale of a distant land, or the warmth and brilliancy of other climes reported to our souls by travellers.

Lead us, Lord, we pray thee! Teach us indeed to sing--

"We're bound for yonder land,
Where Jesus reigns supreme;
We leave the shore at His command,
Forsaking all for Him.

"'T were easy, did we choose,
Again to reach the shore--

[4]What I say of this antediluvian family is only as we see them in Genesis v. I doubt not, as under every trial of man, failure and corruption are witnessed. But I speak merely of their standing and testimony as given to us here. Sons and daughters, as we are told, were born to them, generation after generation, and seeds of apostasy were sown and sprang up among them, I doubt not. But this does not at all affect the lesson we get from this fifth chapter.

But that is what our souls refuse,
We'll never touch it more."

But surely it is one thing to be the advocate of Christianity, and another to be the disciple of it. And though it may sound strange at first, far easier is it to *teach* its lessons than to *learn* them. But so our souls know full well.

We have, however, still to look at the *destiny* and *endowments* of these saints, as we have already looked at their *faith*, their *virtues*, and their *religion*.

The translation of Enoch was the first formal testimony of the great divine secret, that *man was to have a place and inheritance in the heavens*. By creation he was formed for the earth. The garden was his habitation, Eden his demesne, and all the earth his estate. But now is brought forth the deeper purpose, that God has an election from among men, destined, in the everlasting counsels of abounding grace, for heaven.

In the course of ages and dispensations after this, this high purpose of God was only dimly and occasionally, slowly and gradually, manifested. But in the person of Enoch it is made to shine out at once. The heavenly calling at this early moment, and in the bosom of his elect and favoured household, declares itself in its full lustre. This great fact among the antediluvian patriarchs anticipates in spirit the hour of Mount Tabor, the vision of the martyred Stephen, and the taking up of the saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Such was the high destiny of the elect people.

The prophecies of Enoch and of Lamech are samples of their endowments. And rich indeed, worthy of their dignity, these endowments were. For those prophecies under the Holy Ghost tell us that glorious secrets had been entrusted to them. They were treated as in the place of friends. "Shall I hide from them," the Lord was saying to them, as afterwards to Abraham, "that thing which I do?" For such privileges belong only to dignity. See Gen. xviii. 18. And if Abraham knew the doom of Sodom beforehand, Enoch, in a deeper, larger sense, knew the doom of the whole world beforehand. And his prophecy lets out a mystery of solemn and wondrous glory--that the heavenly saints are to accompany the Lord in the day of His power and judgment. And, as of a character equal with this, Lamech's, which comes after, in its turn, with happier anticipations, sketches the scene that lies beyond the judgment, days of millennial blessedness, "the days of heaven upon the earth." The Lord has not given up the earth for ever. And these saints before the flood can speak of that great mystery even before the bow in the cloud becomes the token of it. But they know the judgment of it must come first; and they can speak of that mystery also before the fountains of the great deep were broken up.

Rich endowments in the Spirit thus attach to their high personal dignity with God. As with the Church now. "Stewards" they were "of the mysteries of God." They could "sing of mercy and of judgment;" unto God and of His counsels they could sing. Profoundest secrets feed their souls. "The deep things of God," the things both of prophets and apostles, the things of the epistles and the apocalypse, are theirs. Paul was entrusted with the circumstances of the heavenly calling. He speaks of our being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and of that great expectation as being our comfort and relief against the day of the Lord and its terrors; Enoch in himself, long before, illustrated that very thing. John speaks of the raptured saints accompanying the Lord in the day of His power, joining in the breaking of the potter's vessel, and in the warfare of the Rider on the white horse; Enoch in his prophecy, long before, testified the same. Jude 14, 15. Prophets tell of the wilderness by-and-by rejoicing, and of the desert blossoming, of the blessed One renewing the face of the earth, and instead of the brier, the myrtle flourishing; but long before Lamech had told of this same comfort in the earth again, and this rest for man from the curse of the ground. Gen. v. 29.

Rich indeed were these endowments in the Holy Ghost. There is even peculiar vividness in these earliest utterances of the prophetic spirit. There is commonly a haze over the distance. It is not clear, as if it were the foreground. Indistinctness invests it. And this, in contrast with the nearer landscape, only heightens the impression of the whole. So the notices of the prophets, and the things reported by apostles. They are delivered in different style. Properly so. The haze of distance commonly invests the communications we get of the future. Such is the perfectness of the way of the Spirit. The very drapery under which the distant or the future appears sets it off fitly. Clearness, or literal definiteness, would be offensive, as glare or nakedness. This is commonly so, and this is all admirable. But if *at times* the distance is illuminated, we can delight in it; and in these earliest notices the latest scenes of divine action are thus set off in strange and beautiful distinctness.

Such was the heavenly calling, its virtues, its dignity, and its endowments, of this antediluvian family of God. The end of their path was heavenly also, as heavenly as any feature of it. I speak not of the *fact* of its ending in heaven, but of the very *style* in which it so ended. No sign among the nations gave notice of it. No times or seasons had to mark or measure it. No stated age or numbered years had to spend themselves. No voice of prophecy had so much as hinted the blessed, rapturous moment. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Nothing peculiar ushered forth that glorious hour. No big expectations or strange events gave token of its coming. It was the natural heavenly close of an undeviating heavenly journey.

It was otherwise with Noah afterwards. Great preparation was made for

his deliverance. Years also spent themselves--appointed years. But not so our heavenly patriarch. Noah was carried through the judgment; but Enoch, before it came, was borne to the place out of which it came.[5]

And if the days and years did not measure it, nor signs announce it, did the world, I ask, witness it? Or was it, though so glorious and great, silent and secret?

The language of the apostle seems to give me my answer, and so does all the analogy of Scripture. He "was not found, because God had translated him." This sounds as though man had been a stranger to that glorious hour. The world seems to have inquired and searched after him, like the sons of the prophets after Elijah; but in vain. 2 Kings ii. 17; Heb. xi. 5. And this tells us that the translation had been a secret to man; for they would not have searched, had they seen it.

All scriptural or divine analogy answers me in like manner. Glory, in none of its forms or actions, is for the eye or ear of mere man.

Horses and chariots filled the mountain; but the prophet's servant had to get his eye opened ere he could see them. Daniel saw a glorious stranger, and heard his voice as the voice of a multitude; but the men who stood with him saw nothing--only a terror fell on them. The glory on "the holy hill" shone only in the sight of Peter, James, and John, though the brightness there at that moment (night as it was) might have lighted up all the land; for the divine face "did shine as the sun." Many bodies of saints arose, attendants on the Lord's rising; but it was only to some in the holy city they showed themselves. The heaven was opened over the head of the martyr of Jesus, in the very midst of a multitude; but the glory was seen only by him. Paul went to Paradise, and Philip to Azotus; but no eye of man tracked either the flight or the journey. And beyond all, when Jesus rose, and that, too, from a tomb of hewn stone, and from amid a guard of wakeful soldiers, no ear or eye was in the secret. It was a lie, that the keepers of the stone slept; but it is a truth, that they saw no more of the resurrection than had they done so. Silence and secrecy thus mark all these glorious transactions. Visions, audiences, resurrections, flights, ascensions, the glory down here, and the heaven opened up there, all these go on, and yet mere man is a stranger to all. And the translation of Enoch takes company with all these, I assuredly judge; and so, I further judge, will another glorious hour soon to come, in which "they that are Christ's" are *all* to be interested.

[5] I am not careful to apply all this, as I believe it may be applied. I rather leave it in the way of a suggestion. But it does seem to me that the Lord, *speaking of the Jewish election*, takes Noah for His text or type (Matt. xxiv.); while the apostle, *addressing the Church*, takes his language the rather from the translation of Enoch. 1 Thess. iv. 17; 2 Thess. ii. 1. For the Jewish remnant, like Noah, will be carried through the judgment-—the saints now gathering will be in the sphere out of which the judgment is to be poured. For we are taught again and again, as I have noticed before, that exercise of power in that day, in company with the Lord, is part of the glory of the saints. See Col. iii. 4; Rev. ii. 26; xvii. 14; xix. 14.

I have now reached and closed the fifth chapter. The first part of the Book of Genesis will be found to end here. For these chapters (i.-v.) constitute a little volume.

I. This chapter opens the volume with the work of creation.

II. Creation being complete, the Lord, the Creator, takes His delight in it; and in the midst of it, and over it, places the man whom He had formed in His own image, with all endowments and possessions to make his condition perfect.

III. Man, thus made perfect, being tried and overcome, we see the *ruin* which he wrought, and the *redemption* which God provided.

IV. V. These chapters then show us one branch of this ruined, redeemed family choosing the ruins, and another branch of it delighting in the redemption.

This is simple, and yet perfect. The tale is told--a tale of other days; but in the results and sympathies of which we live at this hour.

It is the sight of the elect, believing, heavenly household, which we get in this little volume, which has at this time drawn my thoughts to it. They walked on earth as we should walk; but they were, by their faith, hope, and destiny, all the while, very near heaven, as we are.

Are we touching the skirts of such glory with unaffected hearts, beloved? Does anything more humble you in His presence, I ask you (for my own soul has already given its answer), than the conviction we have of the little estimation in which the heart holds His promised glory? It is terrible discovery to make of oneself. That we have but small delight in the provisions of His goodness, is more terrible than that we have no answer to the demands of His righteousness. And yet both stand in proof against us. After Israel had left Egypt, they were tested by the voice of the law; but the golden calf tells that they had no answer for it. In the progress of their journey, they are tested by the firstfruits of Canaan; but the desired captain tells that they had no relish for the feast. And what is the heart of man still? What was it in Christ's day? The parable of the marriage of the king's son, like the captain of the wilderness, tells us that there is no relish there for the table which God spreads. What are singing men and singing women to a heavy ear? The pleasant land is despised still. Canaan is not worth the scaling of a single wall, or an encounter with one Amalekite. The farm, the merchandise, and the wife, are made the captain to take us back, in spite of the invitations of love and the treasures of glory.

Terrible discovery! And yet it is not hard to make it. The proof of it clings pretty close to us. We know how quickly present interests move us; how loss depresses and profit elates us; and then, again, we know how dull the glory glitters, if but a difficulty or a hazard lie this side of it.

Are we sorry because of this, beloved? Does it ever break the heart into sighs and groans before our God? Sad and solemn, if we feel it not thus--and

terrible, when we deliberately talk to ourselves of making a captain again. And this we do when the pastime and the pleasures of the sons of men again give animation to our hearts, or when their honours or their pursuits become again our objects. Lot's wife, beloved, had got beyond Sodom, and that, too, in company with the elect, when it was found that she was still there, in such a sense as to perish with the city. Israel was as far as the wilderness of Paran, and that, too, in company with the ark of God, when it was proved that they were still amid the flesh-pots of Egypt. Serious remembrances for us all! holy warnings, that we wanton not with those lusts and enjoyments, which once we watched and mortified.

"Of that day and hour knoweth no man"--are the solemn words by which the Lord refuses to pledge the moment of His return to His Jewish remnant. Matt. xxiv. 36. That moment is to be to them as the thief of the night, or as the hour of the woman in travail. So as to death. If it come on any of us without a moment's warning, the Lord has not been untrue to any pledge He has given. And so as to the rapture. In no case is the day or the hour pledged or made known. All is included in *one* word of deep and holy import--"Watch"--and that one word is addressed to all: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

Whether the close to us be by death or rapture--whether it be to Israel by being taken or left--the day and the hour remain alike untold; no pledge of it is promised at all. Each and all are set on the watch-tower. *We* wait for "the Son from heaven;" *they* will have to wait for "the days of the Son of man;" but neither of us know the hour that closes the waiting.

That is common to them and to us. We stand in equal condition with them as to this. But together with this there is a difference.

The Jewish Remnant are given signs. That is, they are told of certain things which *must* precede "the days of the Son of man," though they are left ignorant of the day or the hour of that appearing. See Matt. xxiv. 32-36. The saints now gathering to the hope of the "Son from heaven" are, on the contrary, not given any such signs, or told of any necessary precursory events.

The Lord communicated His *purpose* of judgment to Noah, but said nothing to him of the *time* of it. But Noah knew that it could not be till his ark was built. He knew not the time when the waters were to rise; but he knew they could not rise till he and his were lodged in safety. This was a sign, or an event necessarily forerunning the close of his history. And so with the earthly Israel. Circumstances must take place, though the day or the hour of it be not known, ere the Son of man can be here on earth again. But not so with Enoch. No circumstance necessarily delayed his translation. His walk with God was not a circumstance. And that was

all that led the way to his ascension. And so with the Church now gathering. She waits for no circumstance--no years measure her sojourn here; no events prepare her heavenward way. She is not put, like the Jewish election, under the restraint of any signs or preceding circumstances.

The Lord treats it as *deceit* to say "the time draweth nigh;" while the apostle *expressly puts us under those words*. Luke xxi. 8; James v. 8. *After certain signs or events*, the Lord tells the remnant that their expectation is near; the apostle tells us that ours is *always so*. Matt. xxiv. 33; Phil. iv. 5. The Lord exhorts the remnant to watch, because the day may otherwise overtake them; the apostle exhorts us to watch, because we are already of the day, and it is fit that we should act as day-men. Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 5, 6.

Here lies a difference. But still, all are equally commanded to watch--we in this our day, as ever knowing that "the end of all things is at hand," and the remnant, in their coming day, even though they know that some events must go before.

And beautiful and just this is. For if the things threatened be profoundly solemn, as they are, and the things promised be unspeakably glorious, as they are, it is but little to require of us to *treat them as supreme*--and that, in other words, is *watching*.

And the sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us. I mean its nearness in *place* as well as time. And we need be at no effort to persuade ourselves of it. It is taught us very clearly and surely. The congregation of Israel were set at the door of the tabernacle, and as soon as the appointed moment came the glory was before them. See Lev. viii. ix. So at the erection of the tabernacle, and so at the introduction of the ark into the temple. Ex. xl.; 2 Chron. v. So when it had business to do (though of different characters) with the company on Mount Tabor, with the dying Stephen, or with Saul on the road to Damascus--wherever it may have to act, and whatever it may be called to do, to convict, to cheer, or to transfigure--to smite to the earth the persecutor, to give triumph to the martyr, or to conform an elect Vessel to itself, it can be present in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is but a thin veil, which either hides it or distances it. The path is short, and the journey rapidly accomplished. We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so ere long, when the time of 1 Cor. xv. 51 arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon as the voice of the archangel summons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us, and in the image of the heavenly to bear us up, like Enoch, to the heavenly country.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints--not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their *personal* beauty. Arrayed in white, and shining in our glories, we shall be the wondrous witness of what He

has done for the sinner that trusts in Him. And as one much loved and honoured in the Lord has just written to me, so I write to you, beloved: "No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air." And his exhortation to me I would make mine to you (though feebly echoed from my heart): "Oh, my brother, set it before your mind's eye as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for the fulfilment!"

"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

NOAH.

GENESIS VI.-XI.

How changed is the whole condition of things since the day of Genesis!

Were I to read the opening of this fine scripture, and just expose my heart to the simpler earliest impression of what I get there, it is this thought which would engage my mind; and yet with all ease we can account for this strange and wondrous revolution. In chapter i. God was alone, producing the fruit of His own handiwork, in wisdom, goodness, and skill; and then all was good and desirable. On the return of every evening and morning the divine delights lingered over what the divine hand was working out, and behold all was very good; and the seventh day was sanctified for the celebration of this rest and enjoyment. But now, it is not God's hand presenting a perfect work to God's thoughts and affections, but it is man, the apostate artificer, spreading out a wide scene of corruption and violence for the grief and repentings of the divine mind. The secret of the change lies there. Man has been at work; man has been fashioning and furnishing the scene, and not the living, blessed God. The earth is therefore filled with violence; giants there are, mighty men, men of renown; and the imaginations of that heart which was now making "this present evil world" are only evil, and that continually.

Here lies the secret. The change was complete because of the new potter that had been at the wheel; the change could not be less. The song of the morning stars, the shout of the sons of God, had no echo in the scene of creation now; man was now abroad--not as a part of the work, but as a reprobate workman.

It is just this which gives character to the opening of chapter vi. And there is no relief for all this in the creature--the best sample and portion it could offer is itself defiled. The sons of God themselves are dragged into the mire--their will, their desire, their taste, are supreme with them. The daughters of Moab have seduced to fornication; and the Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, whose polishing was of sapphire, are become blacker than a coal. The witness against them is, "he also is flesh."

If Adam was seduced by the subtilest of enemies, and followed the sight of his eye and the desire of his heart, the sons of God are now seduced by an enemy equally successful. He works, it is true, from within rather than without--"he also is flesh"--but the sight of the eye and the desire of the heart are again followed. Wives are taken of all "whom they choose;" other lords are listened to, for God is not in all their thoughts, and then it matters not whether it be the promise of the serpent, or the fairness of the daughters of men. Gen. iii. 4, 5.

The multiplying of men on the face of the earth is noticed as connected with all this corruption--just as in the history of the Church. Acts vi. 1. It was when the number of disciples was multiplied that murmurings and disputings began to arise; and these kindred cases in Genesis vi. and Acts vi. tell us that man is never to be trusted, and that the more we get of him the worse things are. "Jesus did not commit Himself to them, for He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Such was the condition of the scene from one end to the other; and against all this corruption and violence which now overspread the earth, the judgment of God is marked--"My spirit shall not *always* strive with man." There may be, and there shall be, a term of long-suffering--as it is said, "his days shall be one hundred and twenty years"--but still judgment is marked, and the day of visitation will come--the Spirit will not *always* strive.

But there is resource in God, as well as judgment with Him. If man, the work of His *hand*, have "grieved" Him, still, drawing from Himself, He will (may I say?) go deeper, and find His joy in the counsels of His *heart*.

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Man, as a sinner, shall become the object of electing, pardoning, justifying love--he shall engage the *heart* now, as of old, at creation, he engaged the *hand* of the Lord.

Thus from Himself the Lord draws, but from Himself in a deeper sense and way than before. This was to be no more repairing of the creature--such a thing would have been no fit work for God. As to man, God had to repent that He had made him on the earth; and as to the scene around him, the mind of God was changed--changed unalterably, and for ever. Man, as a thing formed of the dust, was never to be the divine delight again--mere man. But grace can make a new thing--not repairing the work marred on the wheel, but making it another vessel,

as it seem good to the potter to make it. In its old estate it was ruined, but in its ruins grace will take it up to make it a goodly and a pleasant vessel of richest treasures and all-desirable beauty.

We admire a ruin; and some, as they have thought of this, have suspected the *moral* of such a sentiment, and been ready to condemn the heart and eye that could linger with pleasure over what was the witness of decay and death, and the entrance of the power of sin. But I would venture to embolden such, and to tell them that they may still admire a ruin, and do so without fear or self-judgment. The redeemed thing is a vast, and precious, and beautiful ruin; it will bespeak the power of sin and death for ever, while displaying the boundless, glorious victory of death's Destroyer. And the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the mind of Christ, as well as heaven itself and all its hosts, will linger over that ruin for a happy eternity. It will be the ornament and the delight of the creation of God. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it! Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob!" And again, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance."

This is heaven's admiration of a beautiful ruin; and these are the ways of God. The operations of His hands were, of old, His delight, and the counsels of His grace are now His delight, and the attending angels have their music, and their dancing in the house of the prodigal's Father.

Noah, having thus found grace in the eyes of the Lord, becomes the subject of divine teaching. An elect vessel is always the vessel for the handiwork of God, through the Spirit. The Lord communicates His mind to him; He tells him that the judgment of an evil world, which had now filled up its measure, was marked before Him, but that for him and his house there was safety, and a great deliverance.

This communication has a very precious character in it--*it is strictly according to the previous counsel of His own bosom.* This is very much to be prized. God tells His elect one, that the end of all flesh was come before Him--as, in His own secret counsels He had already said, "My spirit shall not *always* strive with man;" He tells him of the sense and judgment He had of the *moral* condition of the earth--just such as He had uttered in secret before; and, further, He tells him to get ready an ark for the saving of his house, as, in the counsels of His electing love and sovereign purpose, Noah had already found grace in His eyes.

It is very establishing to the heart to notice this. It lets us understand how *exactly* the revelation made to us puts us into possession of the divine mind, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" says the Lord, on another occasion, when He was, as here, speaking to Himself. And a *fulness*, as well as exactness, I may say, distinguishes these revelations. Jesus says to His disciples, "*All* things

that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you"--with, however, one exception. The Lord God had fixed 120 years as the term of His longsuffering. Noah's preaching, as well as ark-building, was to be for that period. Such was the purpose of God. But Noah was told nothing of this predestinated interval. The Lord kept back all mention of the 120 years. Noah knew, indeed, that the waters could not prevail till he and his were safe in the ark, but how long that might be preparing, or whether or not, after it was finished, any time should pass ere the waters should begin to rise, he knew not. This part of the divine counsel the Father kept in His own power; this was the exception to the fulness of the communication. Events were to take place, signs were to precede "the day of the Lord"--such, at least, as the finishing and filling of the ark. In the language of the prophet, the bud was to become tender, and to put forth its leaves. Had any one talked to Noah about the waters rising ere the ark was ready, Noah would not have been shaken in mind, or in anywise troubled. That could not be. "The time draweth nigh" would have been deceit then, as it will be by-and-by, when the earthly remnant, or election, are, like Noah, waiting for redemption. Luke xxi. 8. But still, the period itself, the term of the divine longsuffering, was put in the Father's power, and no one knew the day nor the hour. So rich and full are those harmonies in earlier and latter days, in typical and closing actions of God's hand. Noah was at this time an *earthly* man--that is an elect one destined for inheritance in the earth, as the nation of Israel, by-and-by, will be; and both of them, in their several days, are provided, by divine instructions, against the deceits which might alarm them, or the promises which might seduce them; but the day and hour of their deliverance are not told.

The ark, in the size, fashion, and material of it, is entirely the prescription of God. Noah has but to make it--the Lord plans it as well as appoints it. The making of it is only the trial and the proof of faith--"by faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Israel fashioning the sanctuary, in after days, was a like act of faith. They had to make it, and make it they did, with willing hearts and ready service, yielding their brass, and their silver, and their gold, their fine linen, badgers' skins, shittim-wood, oil, spices, and precious stones. But all this was only the obedience of faith to the way of deliverance and peace, which God Himself had planned and revealed. They made the sanctuary as Noah made the ark; but neither was his act nor their act anything more than faith in the provisions of God. And what is the gospel, and faith in the gospel, to this hour, but such a revelation of the provisions of grace, and such obedience to that revelation? The religion of the elect has ever been the same--"It is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith in God's sovereign provisions was Adam's religion at the beginning, then it was Noah's, afterwards it was the religion of Abraham, and of every true Israelite; and so at this day it is ours. We all, as well as Adam,

come forth from our shame, and fear, and confusion of conscience, at the tidings of the bruised and bruising Seed of the woman. We all, as well as Noah, prepare an ark for salvation, and become heirs of the righteousness which is by faith; we all as well as Israel, betake us from the fiery hill to the sanctuary of enthroned mercy--and Jesus, Jesus, is the name borne along the line, from one end of it to the other, of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints, Gentile and Jewish, small and great, in the deep-toned melody that is to charm the eternity of heaven.

It is not merely mercy. Heaven knows no such thought. Neither is it simple, naked promise. It is *propitiation* and victory, and *purchased* as well as promised blessings.

Inspect the sanctuary of God and you will find that it is not mere mercy that is there. It is enthroned mercy, mercy on the ark of the covenant, mercy sustained by the work and on the person of the Son of God. And faith has respect only to such a mystery as that. Faith never talks of mere mercy. It could not. It could no more talk of mere mercy in God than it could of moral righteousness in man. The gospel does not know such ideas, and therefore faith cannot apprehend them. The gospel reveals One who is just, while justifying the ungodly. Mercy and truth have met together. It is glory to God in the highest while it is peace and good will to men. This is the way of the gospel.

Abraham is in the faith of this, as we see in Genesis xv. The Lord had said to him, "I will give thee this land to inherit it." This was a promise, the promise too of One that could not lie. It was an immutable thing. And Abraham rightly listened to this. As a sinner, who knew full well and full justly, that promises to such an one must have foundations and warranty, he listened to it; therefore he at once says, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Is this a challenge of the promise? Is this a question of the divine truthfulness? No, indeed. It is only faith letting God know, that it was a conscious sinner who was listening to His promise, which needed therefore some warranty, or consideration, to carry it with certainty to the heart. And the Lord was well pleased with this. Faith always pleases Him, as without it nothing does. And at once He prepares to let Abraham know that *sacrifice sustained the promise*.

Our patriarch, before Abraham, was in the like faith. And walking in the steps of the same faith he takes an advanced character. He attains righteousness. "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," is now the word of God to him. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, *and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*."

Love, and faith, and the patience of hope were, however, each to animate his soul, and form his life, for that solemn interval of 120 years. While the ark was preparing, the Spirit, in Noah's preaching, was striving with that generation.

Nothing can be more beautifully replete with meaning than all this. Noah was in the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope--a true Thessalonian saint. He was preparing the ark in that faith which had received the divine warning--in love he was telling his generation of righteousness. 2 Peter ii. 5. Just like a saint of this day. His own safety is settled and sure--*that* he knows; but he is careful that his neighbours should share it with him. The Spirit then strove in the testimony as now He strives; but every stroke of Noah's hammer day by day told that He would not *always* strive.

At the close of this predestinated but undisclosed period, Noah enters the ark. This was the great salvation in a mystery. It was as the night of Egypt's doom and Israel's rescue. Nothing less than safety and deliverance under the fullest securities and dearest title in an hour of most solemn judgment, was now the story of Noah. And this is the salvation of the gospel. In Egypt afterwards, the very hand which carried the sword of destruction along the land had appointed the sheltering blood. Could the sword strike? Impossible! And now it was He, who took counsel with Himself about the judgment of the world, who had also counselled His elect about the way of escape. It was the hand which was about to let the waters out which was now shutting Noah in. Could they then prevail against him! Just, in like manner, impossible!

> "The voice that speaks in thunder
> Says, 'Sinner, I am thine.'"

The One to whom vengeance belongs has settled all the plan of safety. He that is bearing the sword into the land has appointed the scarlet line in the window. But a solemn scene of judgment accompanies all this. The sun was risen on the earth, as, after this, Lot entered into Zoar. And yet that sunny hour was the very time for the rain of brimstone and fire to fall. Nothing could be done till Lot entered the city, but then nothing remained to be done ere the fire came down.

How deeply was the moment of visitation hid! They might well have said, "Peace and safety," when they saw that morning sun, as he was wont, gilding the bright and happy surface of the scene around them. But even then the "sudden destruction" fell.

Noah's generation was eating, and drinking, and marrying, just as the water began to rise. There was no harbinger, save, like Lot's escape to Zoar, Noah's entrance into the ark. But that was folly. To imprison himself and all that he had in the sides of a ship aground, that *was* folly. But the flood came in the moment of fancied security, and took them all away. They were "willingly ignorant" of the word of God, the testimony of the "preacher of righteousness;" one who addressed

them in the power and on the principle of a resurrection hope. 1 Peter iii.

Sudden and sure destruction on all outside, but divine, infallible security on all within. The city of refuge was *appointed of God*, and its walls must be salvation. Impossible to be less. The same righteousness which has pronounced a curse on every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, has likewise pronounced a curse on every one that hangeth on a tree. Gal. iii. Can He then deny His own remedy to the sinner, cursed under the law, when he pleads, by faith, the Saviour cursed on the tree? Alike, impossible.

"The Lord shut him in." The hand of the Lord imparted its own strength and security to Noah's condition. It is not too bold to say, that all within the door of the ark were as safe as the Lord Himself. The Lord returned, we may say, to His own heavens, or to His throne, which is established for ever, and Noah was left on the earth, in the place and day of judgment. But Noah was as safe as the Lord. "We may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world." Jesus has gone back to heaven, and we are still in this world, the judgment of which is marked before God; but we have the boldness which is proper to Jesus. Wonderful to utter it! And yet is all that mysterious, glorious security figured in that little action, "The Lord shut him in." God's own hand imparted its strength to Noah's condition ere He returned to the heavens.

Some of every sort are borne with Noah from the place of death into the ark of salvation. The "eight souls," as Peter speaks, but with them, remnants of the beasts of the earth, small and great, winged fowl and creeping things, all are housed and redeemed together with Noah.

So was it afterwards in Egypt. Not a hoof was left behind. The great redemption of that day, in like manner, provided for all--Moses and the 600,000, with their wives and little ones, and also all their cattle; all again knew and manifested the saving strength of God. As in the day of Nineveh, long after, "the much cattle" are the Lord's thought, as the six-score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left.

And in the coming day of the inheritance of Christ, His dominions will measure all the works of God's hand, "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea;" and the fields and the floods, and the hills and trees of the wood, shall be joyful before Him. Psalm xcviii.

Welcome mystery! Are they not all His creatures? Did not His hand of old form them, and His eyes and His heart rest and delight in them? And is this lost to Him? May Jonah grieve for his withered gourd, and the Lord not spare the works of His own hand for His abiding joy? He will renew the face of the earth, as it is written--The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works. Psalm civ. 31. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity,

not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

But it is here that I may pause for a moment, to notice the dispensational character of these days of Noah.

The earth, as the scene of God's delight, and of His people's citizenship, had been lost by the apostasy of Adam; and the hopes and inheritance of the saints, all through the days before the flood, were heavenly--the Lord thereby disclosing, though faintly, certain portions of the great secrets of His own bosom--the secrets of the good pleasure purposed in Himself ere worlds were, that heaven, as well as earth, should be connected with the destinies of man. The heavens were opened to man, when Adam, the man of the earth, failed. Gen. v. 24.

That was so. But earth was not shut because heaven was thus opened. The divine counsel ran otherwise. It was this--that God would "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." And the heavenly calling having been already revealed in the story of the saints before the flood, the due season had now come for the revelation of God's great purpose concerning the earth, and to make it known that He had not given it up, because, in His dispensational ways, He had taken up the heavens.

As in Rev. iv. When the heavenly saints, "the fulness of the Gentiles," the mystic elders and living creatures, are seated in their heavenly places, the thoughts of Him who sat on the throne there return to the earth. The rainbow is *at once* seen around the throne--the witness of this, that the covenant which gives security *to the earth* was about to be the spring of action in heaven. And so now in these days of Noah. When the heavenly family had ended their course, and Enoch was translated, the Lord's thoughts returned to the earth, and that, I may say, *at once*; for the next thing of character in the progress of the hand, or the Spirit of God, is the prophecy of Lamech, pledging God and His mercies to the earth again, and introducing Noah--"This same [Noah] shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

This is all simple--scarcely capable of being misunderstood. The prophecy of Lamech, which introduces it, tells us what we are to expect and find in the mystery of Noah. "The key of the parable lies at the door." The recovery of the earth, the return of God's rest and delight in it, all this will be made good in the coming times of the true Noah, in whom, and in whom alone, all the promises of God are yea and amen.

A great action, however, must usher in those times. The call of the heavenly people is quite otherwise, as in the call of the antediluvian saints. There

was in those days no interference with the scene around. Cain's family was left in possession--quiet, undisputed possession--of their cities and their wealth. The visitation of God then, as always under such a call, only separated a people without affecting either to regulate or judge the world. It left it as it found it. But God's claim to the earth, and His purpose to take it up again, is necessarily otherwise. There He is as *thoroughly interfering with every thing*, as in the other way of His "manifold wisdom" He was *utterly leaving all alone*. For by judgment He must purge the earth, and get it fit to be His footstool.

All this is the dispensational truth we learn here, in this parable, or in these times of Noah. The earth has been remembered, and is now resumed, but through purifying judgments. All takes the sentence of death into itself, that it may stand as a new thing, in the strength and grace of Him who quickens the dead. The earth itself was in the water, or under the water, and the elect remnant were saved--as in the appointed city of refuge--from the hand of the avenger; and all therefore appears again, as in resurrection.

Beasts, and fowl, and creeping things, some of every sort, go into the ark; and there, within that refuge, which kept its charge in peace from fear of evil, the ransomed passed the days of their patience.

But they were more than safe. They were *remembered*--"God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark." So did Joshua, in other days, remember Rahab. The scene of death and judgment lay all around our patriarch. It was one vast, and deep, and mighty ruin--an extended Jericho the accursed--another and a wider land of Pharaoh, with the doom of the Lord resting darkly and heavily upon it. But He who had already shut His remnant in, now remembers them; and in that remembrance there was present life, and, in prospect, a goodly inheritance.

It will be so with another elect remnant, in coming days. Before the same covenant God, who was now keeping Noah in mind, a book of remembrance will be written for them that fear the Lord and think upon His name. Mal. iii. And of them the Lord says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels;" as now, in virtue of this covenant-remembrance, the Lord causes a wind to pass over the earth, the waters abate, and the ark rests on the mountains of Ararat.

This remembrance of God was most precious. But Noah, in his city of refuge, had other consolations. The divine remembrance was the hidden comfort of faith; but he had also blessed, conscious exercises of spirit.

The ark had a window in it. The door was in the keeping of the Lord, but the window was for Noah's use. He who had shut him in, alone could let him out--the times and the seasons were in *His* hand. But while the time of his pilgrimage, as a prisoner of hope, cannot be shortened, yet may the hopes of such a prisoner be very preciously nourished, and his spirit within him blessedly exercised. Noah

may open the window, remove the covering, look out, and send forth his messengers, his Caleb and Joshua and their companions, to spy out the land, and report to him what it is, whether it be fat or lean, good or bad, and to bring him the fruit of it.

What beauty and what wisdom strike the eye and the heart in all this! This window in the ark, and its uses, are so significant! The divine *methods* are so worthy of the divine *communications*! "Apples of gold in pictures of silver" are the Spirit's words.

Typical, symbolic, parabolic teaching is very acceptable to the heart, and makes ready entrance there. We all prove this, just as children like pictures and stories. Not only, I would here observe, are doctrines thus taught--not only the great mysteries of the glory, but experiences of the soul, the personal inworkings of the Spirit, are illustrated by these same methods. Conviction of sin, for instance, was expressed in Adam retreating from the voice of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden. The longings and inquiries of a soul awakened to a sense of its condition, if haply it might find its path, are given to us in the Israelite standing at his tent door stripped of his ornaments, and looking after the Mediator as he entered the Tabernacle. Ex. xxxiii. And Moses, with his veiled and unveiled face, might have spoken of exercises and experiences of heart to us, even had not the Spirit, by His light in the Apostle, helped our understandings. 2 Cor. iii.

We might go through a thousand such instances. And by this method the great things of God are pressed home upon the heart. By these figures the Lord is standing very near the heart, and knocking there. It is not His grace displaying itself in the distance, or shining from afar, but it is the Lord Himself, and His blessing, coming very near for our full acceptance. We may *admire*, but if we do not also *enjoy*, the purpose of the revelation is not answered.

Now this method is beautifully preserved in these days of Noah. Indeed the whole of Genesis is full of it. It is a book of "allegories," as St. Paul speaks--divine stories written for the school of God.

The ark, as I have already noticed, had its door and its window, and Noah had his spies to send into the promised land--and the mission of these spies, the raven and the dove, express the experience of the saint in the contrary workings of the flesh and spirit, which contend in him.

The raven never returns. The earth may be still unpurged, but the unclean nature can take up with it. The "present evil world" will do well enough for fallen, degraded man. Indeed, the ark was rather a place of captivity than security, to the unclean raven. She never returns to it when once escaped. But Noah will not trust her. Beautiful saintly intelligence! The raven may remain outside; but that is no proof to Noah that the earth is clean, or fit for the sole of his foot. Noah will not trust her, but sends out a clean creature after her. And different indeed

are the tidings which she bears. It is, in principle, the contest of Caleb and Joshua with their companion spies. The dove returns instinctively. There was no rest for her in a place still under judgment of God, and unpurged. And Noah, conscious that he can trust her and commit the question to her settlement, sends her out a second and a third time. And well indeed he may trust her. Her only sympathy is with the pledges of peace and of a new creation. On her second return she bears an olive-leaf in her mouth, and after her third mission she never comes back.

Beautiful mystery! The earth was redeemed from the curse now, and in its new-creation state the dove can delight. All is native air to her. It is now the land of the turtle and the olive, and Noah understands the absence of this clean creature. He at once removes the covering from the ark, and looks out; and the God of glory shortly lets him out, as the God of all grace had before shut him in.

Surely the ways of a saint, the ways of the mind of Christ, are here! I know not that any action can be more pregnant with meaning. There was the ark, and its window, and its door. The ark itself was for safety, the window for a prospect, and the door for an exodus, in due season. All this was faith and hope ending their pilgrimage in the place of promised glory.

Noah suspected not the ark; he did not occupy himself in feeling its timbers, whether indeed they were keeping the waters outside--he had no doubt of that. He had no pump in his ship, if I may be allowed the figure; and I may utter it, since, homely as it is, it glorifies Jesus in the security He gives the sinner; for such is the very style of Scripture itself.

The lesson taught us may be the profoundest in the mind of the Spirit, but the school where it is learnt may be a despised place. Look, for instance, at Genesis xlviii. You are there at the bedside of a dying old man--a common homely spot. But there, some of the deepest and richest secrets of the mind of God are, in a figure, conveyed to us--the great mystery of our adoption, according to divine good pleasure; and then our welcome into the family of God, in the day of our manifestation, or conversion. And what richer counsels of grace are there than those? And yet in what more common or homely school could they have been taught us?

As in still earlier days, in Genesis xvi. There you are introduced to the domestic arrangement of Abraham's family as to the servant and her mistress, and their disputes; and yet, in all that, you get the profound mystery of the two covenants. Gal. iv. And again, in the act, the ordinary act, of discharging a servant, another feature in the same mystery is presented to us, in chapter xxi. The wisdom of God delights in these scenes and materials; they rebuke the erring thought of man's heart, that important things must be done or said by imposing methods--that the prophet must come forth and strike his hand over the place. 2 Kings v. 11. But it is with rude and inartificial instruments that both the wis-

dom of God and the power of God are commonly seen. Rams' horns blew down Jericho, and fishermen turned the world upside down, as was said of them. But these homely methods of God's wisdom aid in carrying the instruction home, and lodging it deep in the intimacies and recollections of the heart. I may therefore still say that Noah's ship had no pump in it. Indeed it could not. Such a thing would have witnessed against it. God's provisions would have declared their own insufficiency. That could never have been. God's provisions and God's works always tell *whose* they are by being *what* they are. Simplicity, and yet sufficiency, give them their character. "Let there be light, and there was light." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and the sinner, believing, rejoiced in God with all his house.

So, in like simplicity, in these earlier days. The heart of Noah was not soiled by a suspicion. He rested in the sea-worthiness of his vessel, because of God's appointment and approval of it--nay, I may say, because of God's building of it. Faith keeping his heart quiet and assured as to the judgment, hope fills it as to the coming glory.

Such is the beautiful way of this "prisoner of hope." *A prisoner of hope* is one of the Spirit's titles, I may say, for all the saints of God. Jeremiah was such an one in his day. Jeremiah was shut up in "the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house," and this, too, for Christ's sake. He was God's prisoner, and such an one is always hope's prisoner. Jeremiah is told to purchase Hananiah's field, and that was food for hope, like the olive-leaf in the mouth of the dove. It told the prophet of good days to come, though at that moment he was in a prison, the Chaldean army at the city gates, and all the land deserted. The waters were again all around and abroad; but the ark of the prophet, like that of the patriarch, had a window in it.

So was Israel a prisoner of hope in the night of the passover. With shoe on foot, staff in hand, and girded loins, Israel waited in the very midst of the judgments of the Lord; but, like our patriarch, they waited there only to pass out to the inheritance of the Lord. And having the pre-eminence in all things, Jesus again and again shows us the perfect way of a prisoner of hope, looking for a resurrection portion. As when He entered Jerusalem, in John xii., the Jewish multitudes and the Gentile strangers being drawn thither to inquire after Him, and all the dignities and joys of the Son of David seeming to wait on Him, His heart waits on the resurrection hope still, "the joy set before him," and forth from that attitude of soul, or place of expectation, He speaks of the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying. Steadily and desirously did His eye rest on the glory which lay, not *in* that hour, but *beyond* it. In a spirit of entire consecration and sacrifice, He surrenders *that* hour (bright to Him in the world as it was, and big with the promise of all its kingdoms and the glory thereof) to the Father: and the voice

from heaven then visits this perfect, blessed "prisoner of hope," with assurances that, in due season, even resurrection times, His name and victory and honour should all be provided for and secured.

Matchless Jesus!--This voice from heaven was again the food of hope's prisoner. And what was the transfiguration on the holy hill but the same? Jesus had been speaking to the disciples of His death, and encouraging them (as He would us, beloved) not to love their lives in this world, when, soon after, six or eight days, as we read, the holy hill shines suddenly with the light of resurrection or millennial regions. And what was all that visitation of glory, but the grapes of Eshcol brought from Canaan to the camp of God in the desert; or as the return of the dove to Noah, with the olive-leaf in her mouth?

The time, however, for "rendering double" to this "prisoner of hope" (Zech. ix. 12), comes in due course. "And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee! bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And Noah went forth. He landed on the renewed earth, where, at that mystic moment, all was, in a great sense, according to God's mind again; no longer corrupt, as when he had last trod it in its old estate, but clean, under the refining of the judgment.

Not a thing had gone into the ark thirteen months before, which did not now come forth. The small and the great had been in it, and the small were as safe as the great; the creeping thing of the ditch or the hedge, as free of all danger or harm as Noah himself. Precious mystery! We may be little, and we are little, as the heart knows full well; but heaven, or the coming system of glory, has fitted itself like the ark, for the receiving of the small as well as the great. "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great." We may be calm, though we know ourselves to be "small" in every way, even as the creeping thing that went in with Noah--for such a little one was equally in the covenant, or "the family settlement," which made each and all, in their way and measure, inheritors of the new world. The Father's house on high has surely made its reckoning according to these differences of "small and great." As in ancient days of typical glory, all the congregation of Israel, the distant ones of Dan and Naphtali, as well as the princes of Judah, joined in the shout of triumph when the fire came down, and in mystery, the kingdom was entered. Lev. ix. Clement and others were not Paul in the measure of their labours, or in the energy of the Spirit; but they were Paul as having their names, alike with his, in the book of life. Phil. iv. 3. The Father has built His house in the heavens, on the very plan of its receiving the saints as well as Jesus Himself. It was part of the

original design. Ere foundations were laid, that plan and purpose were laid. In counsels of everlasting love it was provided that the house should be a large one, a many-roomed or mansioned house, that all the children might be there.

What say we, beloved? Do our thoughts of it and glances at it do justice to this love of God? As well might you say, your prospect from the highest of the hills could do justice to God's creation. Could your glance then measure the ten thousandth part of the earth? The length, the depth, the breadth, the height--the love of Christ which passeth knowledge!

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour: and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." The cleansing of the waters of judgment had made no change in the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart. They were still evil, and that only. The heart was uncured, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," though there be water to cleanse or fire to refine. It was no change there which gave the Lord thoughts of peace and not of evil towards men.

"Faith eyes the blood of Christ, and not victory over corruptions," as one has said, even where there is such victory. But here, *in spite of corruptions*, that blood awakens thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give the sinner an expected end. Christ was under the eye of God, and that was enough; as in the day of atonement. The blood of sprinkling is then seen everywhere. That was the great secret, the great principle, of that mystic day in Israel. The blood of the lamb (Lev. xvi.) went into the presence of God, attended by a cloud of incense; so that Aaron himself was hid, and there was no man in the tabernacle of the congregation, as the holy service of putting the blood on every thing proceeded. Christ in mystery was seen, and nothing else--and the fruit of that was the bearing away of sins into the wilderness, a land not inhabited, a place of forgetfulness, where there was no voice to accuse, to judge, or to condemn, where nothing *could* be heard but the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

That blood, now under the eye of the Lord God, had moved His heart. Do I speak as a man? No, the word is, "The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground." As the Saviour Himself says (in spirit bound for the altar), "Therefore doth my Father *love* me, because I lay down my life." The heart of the Lord God has sealed the acceptance of the sacrifice. It did so here, in the times of Noah.

This word that broke from the heart of the Lord God in Noah's day, the

passage of the burning lamp in Abraham's day (Gen. xv.), and the answer of God to Solomon (2 Chron. i.), all witness to the value of the cross of Christ with God established. The rending of the veil from top to bottom, the breaking of the rocks, and the bursting of the graves, witness the same, when the true offering was once and for ever accomplished. In rich variety of form and character is the acceptance of the work done in "the place that is called Calvary" testified and published--in every tongue and language, as it were, in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

And Noah becomes at once the object of fresh and multiplied blessings, blessings in glory and inheritance now, as already he had blessings in election, an acceptance of grace and the righteousness which is by faith. "God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hand they are delivered."

Noah was blessed in the new world. That blessing conveyed to him property and dominion in the earth, and the use or enjoyment of the creatures good for food. "Every moving thing that liveth" was given to him, that it might be meat for him.

Here was a large grant, as wide as the scene which lay around him. He was monarch of all he surveyed, lord, like Adam in the garden, of the new world. Instructed, however, as well as honoured and enriched--taught that the *blood* of the animal was not to be eaten with its *flesh*: "the flesh with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat"--a principle which involves all the thoughts and counsels of God in His way with sinners--as suited a prohibition, or limitation to the grant made to Noah now, as had been the prohibition of the tree in the midst of the garden, to the grant of all things else made to Adam.

The blood was the life, and man was not to eat it. It would have been a bold re-assuming of that which through sin he had lost, a challenge to regain life by forcing the passage kept by the sword of the cherubim. For this ordinance told the sinner, that having lost his title to the tree of life, he can never return to it in his own strength. The life has reverted to God. Blood is His. And the gospel comes to tell us how He has used it, even providing with it and through it new, eternal, infallible life for the dead sinner.

The way of God in the gospel was, therefore, rehearsed to Noah in this ordinance: "The flesh with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat." His altar had already told us that he stood with Adam in the faith of the woman's Seed, and that that mystery was the principle of his religion and his worship. But here, while making over every thing to him for property, dominion, and use, the Lord will not pass by this great exception out of the grant; conveying, as it does, the great secret or principle of His gospel. In the changed circumstances

of Adam and Noah, in the difference between an upright creature and a ruined sinner, this exception was as fitting and necessary, as I have said, as that of the tree of knowledge out of the grant of all with which the Lord, the Creator, had of old, furnished and filled the scene.

We take life from Christ who has made atonement by His blood. But we deeply own we can get it nowhere else. *We do not look for it elsewhere, but we refuse it not from Him.* We know we were dead in trespasses and sins, but we know that we have life in Him, though only in Him. Adam learnt these things in the promise of the woman's Seed, and in the sword of the cherubim; Noah learnt them or witnessed them in his altar and in this ordinance; these things the whole book of God declares; and eternity will celebrate them.

Further, however, still--for in this blessing we find Noah with the sword of justice in his hand. His fellow-man was to be both protected and avenged. Man's person was sacred; and his life or blood, if shed by either man or beast, would be required. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."[6]

Who does not instinctively approve of this? All that we feel judges the fitness of thus treating the person of man as sacred. While every other moving thing that lived was submitted to the use of man, his fellow-man was to be sacred in his eyes.

We instinctively approve this. But this scripture accounts for this instinct. The reason lies here--"in the image of God made He man." There is a dignity in man that is entirely his own. He is the natural head of creation. Man is the possessor and governor, and not part of the conveyed inheritance, or of the delegated dominion. He is the object and not the subject of the divine grant. The instinctive verdict of our own hearts is thus divinely accounted for.

After this, however, a great subject opens before us. "With thee will I establish my covenant" had been God's word to Noah, before the ark was made, or the waters had come. vi. 18. Now that the judgment is past, and the new earth is inherited, that covenant is fully detailed, as well as pledged again to God's elect. ix. 8-17. And it is here that the word "covenant" is first used. The covenants of which we read in Scripture are all specific, having their parties and their objects well defined and plainly declared. There is no mistaking of them. Whether it be

[6]It has been justly said by another, that the principle of *government* was represented in Noah; that Adam had been the representative head of *creation*, and that Noah is the same now of *government*. And I doubt not, that after the judicial scattering from Babel, the nations became associations in which God still recognized the sword of justice and the seat of government, which therefore are still to be exercised, and ought still to be religiously owned and reverenced.

this covenant of the earth with Noah, the covenant with Abraham and his seed, the covenant of priesthood with Phinehas, or that of the throne with David, all is defined--the parties are declared and the objects set forth. Nor do these, nor any of them, I surely judge, contemplate the peculiar calling of the Church. Spiritual calling in heavenly places, and the results of oneness with Christ, are neither described nor conveyed by them. But the Scriptures of the New Testament abundantly declare a *purpose*, or a counsel, of God according to the good pleasure of His will; a mystery hid in God, before the foundation of the world, in which the Church is directly interested. See Romans xvi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. i. 9; iii. 8-11; Col. i. 26; 1 Tim. ii. 9.

The inquiry may arise, Does this purpose or counsel take the form of a covenant? Let us call it covenant, or simply a purpose taken of God; still the great and holy and august transaction itself is richly found in the New Testament. But has it, we may still ask, the character of a covenant?

I would not be careful to say that it is ever called so; but I believe we may say, that many things of a covenant nature are intimated as attaching to it. Promises are made, consideration or price contemplated, arrangements formed and fixed, and all this as between distinct parties. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me"--"I was set up from everlasting"--and such words of deepest and holiest import have their place in settling these thoughts that arise. And not only were our election, and appointment to our peculiar glory, as in predestination, matters before the world (Rom. viii. 28, 29; Eph. i. 4, 5; 1 Peter i. 2), but we were then formally or virtually given by the Father to Christ. John vi. 37, 39; x. 29; xvii. 1, 6, 8, 9, 11.

And eternal life is declared to have been promised before the world was--language which intimates Christ as a party to a blessed transaction then, and one that has covenant character in it. Titus i. 2.

I do not, then, say that this transaction is called a covenant, as God's dealing with Noah is, and His dealing with Abraham, with David, and with Phinehas; but it has these qualities, or this form of a covenant; the presence of distinct parties, considerations and purposes all settled, and the whole confirmed and acted on. And how does the spirit of a saint welcome the blessed truth of this great eternal transaction, engaging all the Godhead in the behalf of our souls!--as we read, among other passages, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."[7]

[7]As intimating blessed and distinct actions among the Persons of the Godhead, according to covenant arrangements, we may remember Messiah's words in Isa. xlviii.--"And now hath the Lord God and His Spirit sent me." What words! how full of deep, counselled, and ordered grace towards sinners! And they are quite according to the structure of things in the Gospels--for there not only

But what strong foundations are these! what wondrous discoveries of grace! God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in counsel and in action for us! In the Gospel, man is in the place of *vision and audience only*. It is *God* that is active. The activities and sacrifices are *God's*, and the sinner has but to hear and live, to look and be saved. But these doings of God in the gospel of His grace, are the fruit (as we thus see) of precious and wondrous counsels, taken in Himself ere worlds were framed. And what, I ask, can surpass this? Can title or stability for a sinner, such as may allay all motion and uneasiness of conscience, be conceived beyond what he gets in this? Doings for him by God, and sacrifices made for him, and all this according to counsels ere worlds began! A sinner made happy (may I use this word?) at God's expense!

It is covenant or counselled service that Jesus has rendered us. A promise is made to Noah, that the waters shall not again prevail to destroy the earth, but this promise rests on the strong foundation of the blood of a covenant. Noah's altar had already sent up a sweet savour, a savour of rest, to God, and in the satisfaction and delight of that the Lord had said, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake. That blood was the foundation of the promise. Just as with Abraham afterwards. The land is promised to him, but it is by the covenant of Him who passes through the pieces of the sacrifice. No *promised* blessing that is not a *purchased* blessing also--no throne of grace, as we have said before, that does not stay itself on the ark of the covenant. Gen. xv. 17.

But the covenant comes with its seal, as well as with its blood. As here. There is *the bow which witnesses it* as well as *the blood which sustains it*. Wondrous thoughts keep themselves before the soul in all this! The foundation and the witness, the blood and the token, the consideration and the attestation of the great act and deed of God come to mind here. The like figure whereunto even circumcision afterwards; for as the bow in the cloud, so circumcision in the flesh, is a sign of covenant engagements.

All such signs, however, beautiful and sure as they may be, are lost when we think of the great original. For it is the Holy Ghost Himself that is now given as the great sign, the seal of our adoption, the earnest of our inheritance, the witness of the accomplished work of Jesus, and of the acceptance of it in all its sufficiency and preciousness.

What thoughts are these! The promise of God sustained by the blood of the Son, and witnessed by the presence of the Spirit! How has God imparted Himself to us in this marvellous act and deed for sinners! The soul can conceive nothing richer. In divine activities we are interested, but such activities as are founded on

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does the baptism of Jesus but many passages tell us or show us, according to this word of the prophet, that the mission and ministry of the Lord Jesus were under the ordaining of God and the anointing of the Holy Ghost;--the Lord God and His Spirit sent the Son, the Christ or Messiah.

everlasting counsels, and which make manifest to us and for us the name of God, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

How should it take us out of ourselves, to stand in sight of this! What a mystery it is; and what have we to do, but with Moses to "turn aside and see this great sight," turn aside from all else! The grander "this great sight" presents itself to our eye, the more commanding will it be. Let us get rich thoughts of this mystery. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant." Let us see this great transaction settled ere worlds began, see it calling forth all the energies of divine love and power in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, see it undertaking the most deep and marvellous purposes of grace and glory for the elect, keep the eye on it, like Moses, till, like him, we discover Him who dwells in the midst of it, and whose name explains it all.

"Oh, all ye rich, ye wise, ye just,
Who the blood's doctrine have discussed
And judge it mean and slight--
Grant that I may, the rest's your own,
In shame and poverty sit down
At this one well-spring of delight!"

If it be but a man's covenant, there is both the consideration and the deed, the purchase money and the muniments, the price and the witness of its payment. God treats with our souls in language thus well understood, and tells us thus of the *consideration* and the *deed*, or that which *sustains* and that which *witnesses* the counsels of His sovereign good pleasure. It is a deed of gift to the elect, but it is nothing less than the blood of the Son which sustains it, and the presence of the Spirit which witnesses it.

What a secret! By nature I am at a great distance from God, an alien and a foreigner. I am also shut up, so that I cannot come forth. But in this great transaction God Himself undertook to travel this unmeasured distance, and assail the house of my strong enemy; and in His incarnation, sorrows, and victory all this mighty doing of love is accomplished, and I am "compassed about with songs of deliverance."

Can it be, as I gaze at such a mystery, that I fear lest the distant one be not brought nigh, or the captive one be not delivered? "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto me." I may say--"*Thou* art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

"Strong Deliverer!
Be Thou still our strength and shield!"

This may well be our confidence in the faith of such truth. But to these general thoughts on the covenants and their signs, I might add, the token given to Noah has a beautiful significancy. The bow, as it were, rode triumphant on the cloud. It rolled away the stone and sat upon it. Its form and bearing were those of a conqueror. It said to the cloud, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." It gave the angel of death his measure, and said to him, "It is enough, stay now thine hand."

And all this lives in the divine remembrance. The earth and the covenant that secures it are there. "The bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." Accordingly this promise to the earth is remembered, the bow in the cloud is looked at, through every stage and variety of the dispensational actings of the Lord.

It was remembered, of course, all the time the Lord had His seat in Zion, for then the glory made *the earth* its residence. The Lord then dwelt between the cherubim, in the temple at Jerusalem, in the land of Israel. But when the throne of the Lord leaves that city, and the sanctuary loses the glory, because abominations had grieved and disturbed it, the throne and the glory are accompanied by the rainbow to heaven. Ezek. i. 28. Though the earth then ceased, for a while, to be the dwelling-place of God, still it was before Him in counsel. He would be mindful of it, as the object of His faithful care, according to the promise.[8]

And therefore when heaven is opened to our view, we see the faithful and remembered bow encompassing the throne. Rev. iv. And further still. The rainbow is seen when the Lord is presented as coming down for the direct, immediate execution of judgment. The mighty angel, the divine executor of the day of the Lord, comes down to the earth clothed with a cloud, the symbol of judgment, and the fearful vessel of wrath. Gen. ix. 14; Rev. i. 7. But even then the rainbow is with Him (Rev. x.); as much as to tell us, that to the end, and at the end, God remembers His promise to the earth, and will debate with judgment. The cloud is to descend, it is true--"They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." The judgment must sit--the books must be opened--the vials must be emptied; but it is only to take out of the kingdom them that offend--to destroy them that de-

[8]Just like the throne of David. That throne is for the present in the dust--the crown of Judah is cast down--but the promise of the Lord to it is remembered, as is His promise to the earth. This analogy Scripture giveth us in Jer. xxxiii. Dishonoured now or made the sport of the wicked, the promises to the earth and to David's throne are still in full remembrance, and, in their season, will be accomplished.

stroy the earth. The cloud, as it executes its commission, must stay itself at the beginning of the bow. The *day* of the Lord, or the judgment, must give place to the *presence* of the Lord, or the refreshment and restoration. Time shall be no longer, the mighty angel may cry; the present course of things may cease again, as once it did in the days of Noah; but the bow shines, in the eye of the Lord, as brightly as ever, and His promise lives in His heart. The earth is still beloved, for Noah's sake, as Israel is for the fathers' sake--that true Noah, in whom (but in whom alone) all the promises of God are yea and amen; and of whom it shall be said, in all its fulness and truth, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

This earth of ours, given to the children of men, therefore outlives the judgment. It stands the shock of the descent of the mighty angel, though clothed with a cloud, planting his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth, and crying aloud, as when a lion roareth. Rev. x.

And what is it reserved for? For more than the bow had promised it. It is not only preserved--with its seed time and harvest, its summer and winter, its day and night, its cold and heat--but it is to be delivered into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." This is more than had been promised.

Such was the token, and such will be its acknowledgment--such was the pledge, and such will be its redemption. Beautiful mystery! The covenant, with its blood and its sign! God's promise, with the sacrifice of the Son as its foundation, and the presence of the Spirit as its witness!

But here this thought occurs to me: Are we, beloved, to stand before such ways and revelations of God in the same calmness in which they are delivered to us? Is that the thing that becomes us? The Queen of Sheba did not stand before the glories of Solomon in the same way that Solomon himself dwelt among them. Solomon was at home in the midst of them. They were all his own. It was *his* wisdom, and *his* house that he had built. The meat of the table, and the sitting of the servants, with their apparel, were all *his*. The ascent by which he went into the house of God was his. But the Queen of Sheba, from the distant south, was but introduced to it all. Fitting it was that he should be at ease there; and fitting it was that she should be all rapture. So with the book of God and the disciple. All the profound and precious mysteries which the Spirit is unfolding there are His own--the thoughts and counsels of the divine mind. There is no effort to produce effect in the communication of them; the tale of the wonders of grace and glory is told artlessly. But is the soul, introduced to them, to be, in like manner, unmoved? Such an one may rather gaze with more of rapture than she who came from the uttermost parts of the earth, for "a greater than Solomon is here."

And it is more of this Sheba-rapture we want. We too easily afford to talk of God's things as though there were no more preciousness and excellency in them

than our hearts could measure; but as secret after secret comes forth from the wisdom of the greater than Solomon, surely our souls should say, "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom."

Endowed and blessed, enriched and honoured--instructed too, and ordained as "the power" under God, and with all this, at ease, in conscious safety, "no evil or enemy occurrent," Noah is seated in the new world. A new trial of man, under new circumstances, was proceeding; and, as with Adam in Eden, nothing is left undone on God's part. The oxen and fatlings were killed, and all things were ready. But where is man's sufficiency? If Adam failed before him, and lost the garden; if Israel failed after him, and lost their land of milk and honey; it may be said to Noah, "Lovest thou me more than these?" In Christ, and in Him only, are unfailing fidelity and strength. And Noah, like the rest, fails, and the virgin soil of the new world is quickly tarnished by the very first foot that trod it.

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, and drank of the vine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within the tent."

Noah himself is put to shame; the very first man, the Adam of this new system, begins the history of this second apostasy, like his first father.

The "little fire" is thus kindled; but it is for "a greater matter." Noah is put to shame; but Ham, his son, glories in the shame. That was a terrible advance in the progress of evil. "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without."

It was a terrible advance in evil; this was not simply the being "overtaken in a fault," but "rejoicing in iniquity." The common moral sense rejects this--"Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on their shoulders, went backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father." And the saint himself is soon restored. Noah awakens from his wine. He that was overtaken recovers himself, through the Spirit, and the grace of God gives him a great triumph--a very precious and glorious triumph indeed, for the restored one judges his judge, and condemns his accuser--"Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." This is something more than recovery--it is triumphant recovery. Even the apostle's fine word, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" scarcely measures it; for that is only the silencing of the accuser, while this is turning back on the pursuer. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall rise.... Then she that is mine enemy shall be trodden down as the mire of the streets."

Here, however, we may stand for a moment--the rich and interesting prospects of the Spirit of prophecy here spread themselves out before us.

This curse upon Canaan is part of Noah's prophecy. Noah, in spirit, looked

out from the renewed earth, but anticipated the return of corruption and violence, though the grace of God were to have its witness in the midst of it. In detail, he saw that one branch of the human family (now about to re-people the earth) was to be distinguished by the revelation and presence of God among them; another by their success and advancement in the world--a people to be enlarged and made honourable in the earth; another, by the constant, unchanging token, in their flesh, of degradation and servitude. His prophecy contemplated, as we may say, the Asiatic, the European, and the African man; or, the Hebrew in the East, with whom was to be the sanctuary of God--the Gentile of the West, who was, under the hand or providence of God, to make himself great in borders beyond his own--and the slave of the South, who might know a change of masters, but who was to be a slave still.

Short is the notice of the world's history, but just and perfect as far as it goes, and enough to answer the purpose of the Spirit in Noah, who was taking his son Ham for his text.

The three prophecies, which we get in these earliest times, that of Enoch, that of Lamech, and this of Noah, all touching the earth and its history, though respecting different stages or parts of that history, together present a very perfect outline of the whole thing. We must take them in this order--Noah's, Enoch's, Lamech's.

Noah's prophecy has been accomplishing from of old, and is still getting its seal and witness in all the changes of the world's solemn and interesting story. Enoch's (Jude 14), which spoke of judgment, will have its answer, its full answer, when the present course of things is closing, and the day of the Lord comes to convince the ungodly. Lamech's (Genesis v. 29), which spoke of rest, will be made good afterwards, when, "the day of the Lord" having fulfilled the judgment, "the presence of the Lord" will bring its restitution and refreshing.

The present and the future of the world's history, the varied good and evil of the present, and the judgment and the glory that are to share the future, are thus sketched before us in these prophecies. It is easy to discern these things, and to give these early patriarchal oracles their order and character.

It is Noah's, however, that I must look at more particularly, as what we have more properly to do with here. It was delivered on the discovery of the evil of his son Ham, and the onward course of evil is then detailed to its close and maturity, ere we leave these chapters.

We have already watched the infant springing of it in Noah himself, and the advanced form of it in Ham. Its further growth is next to be seen in the builders of Babel, some hundred years after the flood. And an awful exhibition it is.

At the birth-time of this new world, Noah's altar was raised, witnessing faith and worship--but now the city and the tower are reared, witnessing defi-

ance of God and the affected independency of man. And the answer of heaven to these things is just as different. Noah's altar brought down words and tokens of peace and security--the cry of the city and the tower now bring down judgment. Corruption here, and vengeance from on high, mark the scene, instead of worship here, and blessing from God. Then it was, that the Lord hung the bright token of His covenant in the heavens, but now He is sending abroad over the earth the witnesses of His righteous anger.

But this is not all. The tower is over-topped, high and proud as it was. The builders may be scattered, but their principles survive. Judgment does not cure. All the apostate mind that quickened that proud and rebellious confederacy, gathers itself rapidly for its perfect work and display in one man. For soon after the scattering (it may be about thirty years) Nimrod, a grandson of Ham, plants his standard on the very spot which had witnessed the judgment of God. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel. x. 10. He unfurls his banner in the very face of Him "to whom vengeance belongs," and cries, "Where is the God of judgment?" He was as the fool of Ps. xiv.--"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He begins to be a mighty one in the earth. "Before the Lord he hunted." In defiance of God he sought conquest and power. He added house to house and field to field, in the desire to be lord alone. Erech and Accad and Calneh are mother-cities, and mighty Nineveh with Rehoboth and Calah, and that great city Resen, are but colonies in the system of this vaunting apostate. He had no heart for any portion which God could give him. He undertook to provide for himself, to be the maker of his own fortune, that his dignity and honour should proceed from himself. And such an one is the man of the world to this day. His intellect or his industry, his skill or his courage, makes him what he is, and provides him what he cares for. Such was this distinguished apostate, this earliest representative and type of that one who, in closing days, is to do according to his will, and fill the measure of man's iniquity.

It is a serious sight for the watching and observance of our souls. Are we, beloved, waiting for other and purer scenes? and are our hearts upon such enjoyments as God can sanction, and Jesus share with us?

These chapters properly close with this--these scenes of evil and proud rebellion pass from before us, with a faint and distant view of the call of another heavenly stranger apart from the world. But all that is the dawn of another era in the ways of God, and our present subject only looks at it in the distance.

The second part of the book of Genesis, I may say, ends here. It presents a complete, distinct action, suitably following what had preceded it, and as suitably (were it my purpose to show it) introducing what is to follow it.

In this portion, Gen. vi.-xi., the scene is laid in the earth. The heavenly family have already been before us, Gen. i.-v., and their course ended in the transla-

tion of Enoch; now the scene is laid in the earth again, as at the beginning in the garden of Eden.

The contents of this little volume, which I have now closed, might be given in the following order:

vi.-viii. These chapters present the sin and judgment of the earth, with the election, faith, and deliverance of the saints in the midst of it all, and out of it all.

ix. This chapter shows us the new condition of man in the new world, endowed and enriched there by the God of heaven and earth, secured in the covenant mercy, and made the representative and executor of divine authority.

x. xi. These chapters unfold great portions of the history of the new world, the springs, workings, progress, and maturity of evil, leaving or rendering the earth such a place as that the Lord must again, a second time, retire from it (at least for the present) and bring out from it, also a second time, a people to be heavenly strangers in the midst of it, like the antediluvian saints.

Heaven and earth have thus, in their season, been rehearsing the mystery, till together, in coming days, the days of the glory, they shall display it, when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"The land shall not be sold for ever," says the Lord; "for the land is mine." Lev. xxv. 23. Man has a term of years granted him, in which it is left in his power to disturb the divine order. For forty-nine years in Israel disturbing traffic might go on, but in the fiftieth year the Lord asserted His right, and restored all things according to His own mind; for it was a time of "refreshing" and of "restitution" as from His own "presence."

Bright and happy expectation! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is the proclamation of Psalm xxiv. And then the challenge goes forth, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?"--that is, Who shall take the government of this earth and its fulness? And the answer is made by another challenge to the city gates, to lift up their heads to the Lord of hosts, the King of glory; a fervent form of words whereby to convey the truth, that the Lord, as in strength and victory, the Lord as Redeemer and Avenger, should take the government. As again in Rev. v. a like proclamation is heard, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And the answer from every region is this, "The Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He who sat on the throne gave that answer by letting the Book pass from His hand into the hand of the Lamb. The living creatures and crowned elders joined in that answer by singing their song over the prospect of their reign over the earth. The hosts of angels add

to it, by ascribing all wisdom and strength and honour and faculty of dominion unto the Lamb--and every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the seas, in their order and measure, join in uttering this same answer. The title of the Lamb to take dominion in the earth is thus owned and verified in the very place where alone all lordship or office could be rightly attested--the presence of the throne in heaven.

And so it is. The nobleman has now gone into the distant country to get for himself a kingdom. Jesus, who refused all power from the god of this world (Matt. iv.), or from the desire of the multitude (John vi.), takes it from God, as He owns in Psalm lxii. that to Him it belongs. And in due season He will return, and those who have owned Him in the day of His rejection shall shine with Him in the day of His glory; those who have served Him now shall take another city with Him then.

In the prospect of such a day, Paul says to Timothy, "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His time He shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." And in the like prospect the same dear apostle could say of himself, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

May the Lord give our poor hearts--for they need it much--more of the like spirit of faith and power of hope! Amen.

ABRAHAM.

GENESIS XII.-XXV.

In earlier parts of the book of Genesis, I have already traced two distinct histories--that of the antediluvian saints, or the times from Adam to Enoch; and that of Noah and of those who followed him, down to the scattering of the nations.

The first of these histories occupies chapters i.-v., the second, vi.-xi.

In the chapter which follows--xii.--the story of Abraham begins, and is continued down to chap. xxv. This forms the third portion or section of the book of Genesis, and presents to us a new era in the ways of God. And in all this, I am sure, there is beautiful moral order, and an unfolding of the dispensational wis-

dom of God. For in these things the heavens and the earth are made, by turns, to take up the wondrous tale of that wisdom, and to rehearse divine mysteries--such mysteries as, "in the fulness of time," will be accomplished, when, as we know, He shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Eph. i. 10.

Adam in innocency was a man of the earth. He had to enjoy it, knowing it all as his, but knowing nothing as his beside. But when he was sent out of Eden, he became a stranger in the earth. He received no commission to improve or furnish it. He had simply to till the ground for a living, and the translation of Enoch tells us, that the destiny and inheritance of that earliest household of God was *heavenly*.[9]

In Noah, however, in process of time, the purpose of God is different. Noah is a man of the earth again. He leaves the ark in a character very different from that in which Adam had left the garden. Noah left the ark under commission to keep the world in order, as judge and ruler. It was not strangership on it, but citizenship in it, and government of it, that was now again the divine thought. But a second apostasy was witnessed in the midst of Noah's descendants. In process of time, they affected independency in the earth, casting off the fear of God, and seeking to do for themselves without Him, as Adam had (seeking to be as God) in the garden of old.

Abraham, upon all this, finds grace in the eyes of the Lord. He is called out from this apostate scene; and, as we might expect, from this alternate telling of heavenly and earthly mysteries, after Noah the man of the earth, Abraham is called to be a heavenly man.

The Lord said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." This was the character of the call of Abraham. It was not a call from moral pollution, or from idolatry, or the like; it was a call from the associations of nature and of the earth. There were idols to be left, I doubt not. See Joshua xxiv. 2, 3. But it was not the leaving of them that constituted the nature of the call. Yet Abraham, touching the earth, was to be like Adam outside the garden. He leaves Ur of the Chaldees, as Adam left Eden. He received no commission to cultivate the land of Canaan for the Lord, or to conquer and govern the people there. The arrangements of the world were left just as they were. Abraham had

[9]The family of Cain was the contradiction of this, in those antediluvian days. They tilled the ground for something more than livelihood. Their tillage led to the culture and advancement of the world as a system of gain and pleasure. And thus were the two families distinguished--the one was formed by faith, or by obedience to the revelation of God; the other by the despite of it, as the world is to this day.

nothing to say to the nations through which he passed on his way to Canaan; and when he reached that land, he found the Canaanite there, and there he left him as he found him.

Government had been set up in Noah, and nations had been organized; as natural relationships had been instituted at the beginning, or in Adam. But Abraham is called from all this. God Himself is received by faith; and the things of nature which Adam might have conveyed to him, or the things of government which Noah might have secured to him, are left behind.[10]

In our patriarch, then, we see the election and the call of God. He was of the corrupt, departed family of man, without a single claim on God. But sovereign grace (in the virtue of which all the redeemed, according to eternal counsel, stand) had made him its object; and under such grace he is, in due time, manifested as a chosen one, and is called of God to be a heavenly stranger in the world. Scripture speaks of him as the father of all them that believe. Rom. iv. We may, therefore, expect to find the life of faith exhibited in him; and so we do find it, as this little book designs to show.

But in this "life of faith" we do not merely look for the principle of dependence on God, or of confidence in Him, though that may be the thought immediately suggested by such words. It signifies much more. It is a life of large and various energies; for according to God, or Scripture, faith is that principle in the soul which not only trusts Him and believes Him; it is also that which apprehends His way, acts in concert with His principles and purposes, receives His promises, enjoys His favour, does His bidding, looks for His kingdom, in His strength gains victories, and by His light walks in light; and thus it is ever, though variously, exhibiting a life according to Him, or formed by communion with Him.

All this is strongly marked for our observation.

Heb. xi. shows us all this--the life of faith in its vast diversity of exercise and action. Accordingly, we shall find, in the life of Abraham, occasions where confidence in God was the virtue exercised; occasions, too, where strength was put forth and conflict endured; and again, where surrender of rights and submission to wrongs were the virtues. And the life of faith is beautiful in its variety; for this variety is but the changeful glowing of the same mind, the mind of Christ, in the saint.

But again. We are not to understand that we get *nothing else* than this light and power of faith in the believer or saint. Perfectness in this variety of the life

[10]In their day, Abraham's seed, or the nation of Israel, are again an *earthly* people; and they exhibit the very opposite of all this. They *smite* the nations of Canaan; and instead of being called *from* kindred and country, they are called *to* all such things; men, women, children, and even cattle (for not a hoof was to be left behind), journeyed from Egypt to Canaan--from a land of strangers to their own inheritance.

of faith is not to be found save in Him who is set before us as "the Author and Finisher of faith," and whose way, from beginning to end, and in every incident of it, was the great exemplar of this life in full unsullied brightness. Still, however, the life of Abraham, or of David, or of Joseph, or of Paul, is to be called the life of faith; for it was the life of those in whom that principle was, though betraying again and again, and that too in different ways, the pravity of nature, the workings of unbelief, and the counsels of a heart prone to converse with flesh and blood, and to take the way of a revolted world.

This life of faith our Abraham entered upon with beautiful simplicity and earnestness. "He went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came." He went out, not knowing whither he went. He took God for his security and his portion; and, as another has said, "it is in this that the Spirit of God rests, as characteristic of his approved faith; for, by separation from the world, on the ground of implicit confidence in God, he lost everything, and got nothing but *the word of God*."

We do not like such conditions. The heart resents them; but the renewed mind approves them, and justifies God in them. The *sufferings* of Christ are first, and then the *glories*. 1 Peter i. 11. Job was nearer his good thing in God, when he lay in ashes amid the potsherds, than when he was happy in his nest. Israel did not descend Mount Lebanon, and enter Canaan after a fruitful journey, through a land of cities and villages, and corn and wine, and rivers and vineyards; but they paced it slowly, through one desert after another. And so Abraham was called out from all, to go he knew not whither; but this he knew, that it was God who had called him. And this was faith's beginning. "He went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came."

He came, however, rather to sojourn than to dwell there. He moves from place to place, and in every place it is but a tent he pitches. He had been told by the God of glory, that the land should be *shown* him. He should *have* it in *his seed* for ever, but in *his own person* he was but to *see* it. And, accordingly, we find him *surveying it carefully*, but not *occupying any of it*. For this was the right answer of such a promise. He *looked* on the land, because the promise was that it should be *shown* him. He went first to Sichem and to the plain of Moreh; from thence, southward, to the neighbourhood of Bethel and Ai. But he was a man of the tent, and of the tent only, wherever he went. The Canaanite was then in the land, and he was the occupier of the soil; and Abraham did not dispute with him for a foot's breadth of it. He surveyed it, and had such possession of it as faith and hope imparted; but he sought no personal, present inheritance there. The promise lived in his heart, and the promise was his measure as well as his joy. Chapter xii.

Quickly, however, another man in our Abraham is before us; for, like all of us, beloved, he was a man of *nature*, as he was a man of God; and there is none perfect in the life of faith, as we said before, but the Master Himself. Famine touches the land into which the call of God had brought him. A strange surprise this may well be thought to have been. But faith would have been equal to it. Faith in Paul was equal to a like surprise. Called into Macedonia by the voice of God, a prison awaited him. But Paul stands the shock, though Abraham falls before it. Paul and his companion sing hymns in the prison in Macedonia; but Abraham practises a lie, seeking help from the famine of Canaan in another land, of which his call under the God of glory had made no mention whatever.

Such things have been, and still are, found among the saints. There are "Little Faith" and "Great Heart" among the elect, as well as flesh and spirit--nature and the new mind in each of them. But this we may know: that if nature *rule* us, nature will *expose* us. Even the man of the earth, Pharaoh of Egypt, puts Abraham to shame; and his journey, instead of being onward in the witness of his tent and in the joy of his altar, was that of a wearied foot, because it was that of a rebuking heart. He has to "do his first works," to retrace his steps, and regain his standing--sorrowful works at all times. He has to leave "by-path meadow" for the King's highway again, betaking himself back from Egypt to the place between Ai and Bethel, where he had raised his altar at the first.

What say we to this, beloved? The flocks got in Egypt accompany him home. The glitter of the gold and the silver--the offerings of a land that lay beyond where the God of glory had called him--adorn and set off his return. All this is so indeed. But what say we to all this? again I ask. Is the bleating and the lowing of such flocks and herds in our ears like the soft music of an approving conscience? or this glittering wealth like the brightness of the divine presence which was now lost to Abraham? I am bold to answer for Abraham, though I may not for myself, that his spirit knew the difference. The wearied heart was but feebly relieved by all that he brought with him from the land of Egypt, or out of the house of Pharaoh. Sure I am of this. It could not but be so with such a man. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul," must have been his experience; and his action in the scene which immediately succeeds, as I judge, tells us something of this.

Lot, his younger brother, or his brother's son, who had come with him out of Ur into Canaan, now becomes the occasion of trial to Abraham, as the famine had lately been. But faith in Abraham triumphs, I may say, to admiration. The very style in which he gives this trial its answer seems to say, that he will return fourfold to the life of faith for that which nature had so lately, as it were, taken away from it. The herdmen of the two brothers, the elder and the younger, cannot feed their flocks together. They must separate. This was the occasion of trial which had now arisen. But "let Lot choose," is Abraham's language. In a fine sense, he

will act on the divine oracle, "the elder shall serve the younger." Lot may choose, and leave Abraham what portion he please. The well-watered plains may be his; Abraham can trust the Lord of the country, though he lose them. He may have to *dig* wells instead of *finding* them; but it is better to dig for them in the strength of God, than to find them in the way of covetousness; better, as it were, to wait for them in Canaan, than to go after them again down to Egypt. xiii.

This is beautiful recovery. And in this way will faith, at times, exercise judgment on unbelief, and clear itself again. And now the Lord visits him, as He had not, as He could not, have done in Egypt. The God of glory, who had called Abraham into Canaan, could not go with him into Egypt: but to the man who was surrendering the best of the land to his younger brother, in the joy of restored confidence in God, He will delight to show Himself.

Where, then, are we, beloved? I will ask. Where is our spirit? On which road with Abraham are we, as at this moment, travelling? Are we knowing Egypt in the bitterness of self-reproach, or a regained Canaan in the joy of God's countenance? Is it a walk with God we are taking every day? The life of faith knows the difference between the checks of the worldly mind and the enlargements of the believing mind. Abraham knew these things. He knew, in spirit, what Egypt was--the place of gold and of silver, and of rebuke and death; he knew what it was to regain Ai without an altar on the road; and he knew what it was to rest again, with altar and tent, in the plains of Mamre.

Thus the chequered life of faith begins. But there is vastly more in it than this. And in this variety of action in the life of faith, we notice its *intelligence*, the exercise of the mind of Christ, or of the spiritual sense, which discerns things that differ, which has capacity to know times and seasons according to God. This fine endowment of the saint we find in Abraham, in the next passage of his history.

The battle of the kings is recorded in chap. xiv. While that was a mere contest between such, Abraham has nothing to say to it. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds. But as soon as he hears that his kinsman Lot is involved in that struggle, he stirs himself.

Everything, as we read, is beautiful in its season. There is a time to build, and a time to pull down. There was a time for Abraham to be still, and a time for Abraham to be active; a time to be silent, and a time to break silence. And he understood the time. Like the men of Issachar afterwards, he knew the time, and what Israel ought to do. God's principles were Abraham's rules. Lot was taken prisoner, and the kinsman's part was now Abraham's duty. The battle-field in the vale of Siddim shall be his now, as the tent had been his till now in the plains of Mamre. The mind of God had another lesson for him than that which he learnt

while the potsherds of the earth were alone in the conflict; and a time to break silence calls him out at the head of his trained servants.

Excellent and beautiful indeed in a saint is this intelligence of the mind of Christ, and beautiful is everything in its season. Out of season the very same action is defiled and disfigured. For the *material* of an action is not enough to determine the *character* of an action. It must be *seasonable* likewise. Elijah, from his elevation, may call down fire from heaven on the captains and their fifties; and so, the two witnesses, in the day of Rev. xi. But it will not do for the companions of the lowly, rejected Jesus to act thus on the Samaritan villagers. Luke ix. It is only in its season that anything is really right. How was the garden of Gethsemane (made sacred as it was by the sorrows of the Lord Jesus) disfigured by the blood which Peter's sword drew there! What a stain on that soil, though the power of Christ was present to remove it! But another sword was doing right service when it hewed Agag in pieces. For when vengeance is demanded, when the trumpet of the sanctuary sounds an alarm for war, vengeance or war will be as perfect as grace and suffering. It is for God to determine the dispensational way, and to make known the dispensational truth. That being done, all life of faith is just that manner or order or character of life that is according to it. "The duties and services of faith flow from truths entrusted. If the truths be neglected, the duties or services cannot be fulfilled." And the good pleasure of God, or His revealed and dispensed wisdom, varies in changing and advancing ages. Noah, in a few generations before Abraham, would have avenged the blood of one made in the likeness or image of God, in the same spirit of faith, as Abraham allowed one army of confederate kings to slay another. It is neither the "sword" nor the "garment," as the Lord speaks in Luke xxii., that must needs be the due instrument of service, or symbol of faith; but either of them, according as it severally expresses the dispensational good pleasure of God at the time.

This is much to be observed; for the distinguishing of things that differ, and the rightly dividing of the word of God or of truth, is expected, among other virtues, in the life of faith. Abraham was endowed with this fine faculty. He walked in the light of that day, as God was in the light. He knew the voice of the silver trumpet; when, as it were, to gather to the tabernacle, and when to go forth to the battle.

But there is more than this in our patriarch at this time. Two victories distinguish him--one over the armies of the kings, and one over the offers of the king of Sodom.

The first of these Abraham gained, because he struck the blow exactly in God's time. He went out to the battle neither sooner nor later than God would

have had him. He waited, as it were, till "he heard the going in the mulberry trees." Victory was therefore sure; for the battle was the Lord's, not his. His arm was braced by the Lord; and this victory of Abraham's was that of an earlier sling and stone, or of the jaw-bone of an ass, or of a Jonathan and his armour-bearer against a Philistine host; for Abraham's was but a *band of trained servants against the armies of four confederated kings*.

The second, still brighter than the first, was achieved in virtue of fellowship with the very springs of divine strength. The *spirit* of the patriarch was in victory here, as his *arm* had been before. He had so drunk in the communication of the King of Salem--had so fed on the bread and wine of that royal, priestly stranger--that the king of Sodom spread out his feast in vain. The soul of Abraham *had been in heaven*, and he could not return to the world.

That was his blessed experience in the valley of Shaveh. Happy soul indeed! Oh for something more than to trace the image of it in the book! Zaccheus, in his day, was a son of Abraham in this generation, or according to this life and power. Zaccheus so drank in the joy and strength that are to be known in the presence of Christ, that the world became a dead thing to him. He had sat at table with the true Melchizedek, and had eaten of His bread and drunk of His wine. Jesus had spread a feast for His host at Jericho as He had in other days for Abraham in the valley of Shaveh; and, strengthened and refreshed, this son of Abraham, like his father of old, was able to surrender the world. Behold, Lord, says he, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. He could give Abraham's answer to the king of Sodom, for he had had Abraham's refreshment from the King of Salem.

Surely, beloved, this is the way of victory in all the saints. The springs of strength and joy are found in Jesus. May you and I be able to look at Him and say, "All my fresh springs are in thee." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And what are all conquests in God's account but such?--

> "'Tis within
> The fervent spirit labours. There he gains
> Fresh conquests o'er himself, compared with which
> The laurels that a Cæsar wears are weeds."

Such, then, are the victories of faith.

But we have more still; and in the next scene, in chapter xv. we see faith's *boldness*.

And let me ask, for our common comfort, what more precious with God

Himself than this? The intelligence of faith is bright, and its victories glorious; but in the accounting of the God of all grace, its boldness surpasses all.

After Abraham's victory over the world, or over the offers of the king of Sodom, the Lord comes to him with some great pledges and promises. After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. xv. 1. After the heat of the preceding day, it was meet, in the ways of grace, that Abraham should be owned again, and encouraged again. But faith is bold, very bold, apparently aiming higher than the purposes and undertakings of grace. And this is a wonderful moment to contemplate. Abraham seems to throw back the words of the Lord. "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," says the Lord. "What wilt thou give me?" Abraham replies--"What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?"

This was bold; but, blessed to say it, not too bold for the ear of the Lord who finds His richest joy in the language of faith like this.

Good it is to have a *portion*; but Abraham sought an *object*, an object for the heart; something far more important to us. Adam found it so. Eden was not to him what Eve was. The garden with all its tributes did not do for him what the helpmeet did. Eve opened his mouth; she alone did that, because she alone had filled his heart. Christ finds it so. The Church is more to Him than all the glory of the kingdom--as the pearl and the treasure were more to the men who found them, than all their possessions, for they sold all to get them. The strayed sheep, the lost piece of silver, the prodigal son, are more to heaven--to the Father, to the Shepherd, to the Spirit, and to angels--as occasions of joy, than all else; just because the heart has got its object--love has found its answer. *This* is the mind of Christ. Affection puts the heart on a journey; and it cannot rest, in the midst of all beside, without its object; and it says even to the Lord and His pledges, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?"

But bold faith this was indeed, appearing thus to throw back the words of God. But it was precious to Him. Yea, it was precious to Him on the highest kind of title; for faith, acting thus and craving after this manner, spoke the way and the taste of the divine mind itself. For God Himself looks for children, as Abraham did. It is not the spirit of bondage that is to fill His house, but that of adoption; it is not servants but children He will have round Him. He has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, *to Himself*." He has found in His children an object for *Himself*; and Abraham was, therefore, but telling out the *common* secret of his own heart, and of the bosom of God. And at once his desire is answered; and the sight of the starry heavens is made to pledge to the patriarch something better than all portions and all conditions; for the Lord says to him, "So shall thy *seed* be."

How truly may we say, never does faith aim more justly than when it aims high, and draws with a bold hand. Never is the mark it sets before it more God's own purpose. "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God," says the prophet to the king, "ask it either in the depth, or in the height above;" range through the divine resources, and use them. What king Ahaz would not do, wearying the Lord by his reserve, and unbelief, and slowness of heart, Abraham does and continues to do. His soul continues in the same power of faith to the end of this action. He holds on in the same track. "I'll give thee this land to inherit it," says the Lord to him shortly afterwards. "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" is his reply to the Lord. This is of the same fine character; and being so--bespeaking the boldness of faith--it is still infinitely acceptable with the Lord. Abraham seeks something beyond a promise. Not that he doubted the promise. He was sure of it. It could never fail. Heaven and earth would pass away, ere it could pass away. But "oath and blood" to seal it were desired by Abraham. He loved *covenant* title, and his faith sought it; but sought no more than grace and purpose and sovereign good-pleasure had already designed to give him.

And there lies the richest, fullest consolation. *Faith is never too bold to please the Lord.* In the days of His flesh, He often rebuked the reserves and suspicions of little faith, but never the strength and decision of a faith that aimed as at everything, and would not go without a blessing. So, the very style in which, in this fine chapter (xv.), He answers the faith of His servant, tells us of the delight with which He had entertained His servant's boldness. The very *style* of the answer speaks this in our ears; as afterwards in the case of the palsied man in Luke v.; for there the words, "Man, thy sins be forgiven thee," tell how the heart of the same Lord, the God of Abraham, had been refreshed by the faith which broke up the roof of the house without apology, in order to reach Him. And it is the same here. When a fine, bold, unquestioning faith sought for a child, the Lord God took Abraham forth that very night, and, showing him the starry heavens, said to him, "So shall thy seed be." When like faith would have the land secured by something more than a word of promise, the same Lord pledges the covenant by the passage of a burning lamp between the pieces of the sacrifice.

This *style*, as I said, is full of meaning. It eloquently (may I say?) bespeaks the divine mind. The Lord does not content Himself by merely promising a child, as by word of mouth, or by merely giving some other assurances to Abraham that the land shall be the inheritance of his seed; but, in each case, He enters on certain actions, and conducts them with such august and striking solemnities, as lets us know instinctively, the delight with which He had listened to these demands of faith.

Would that we knew our God as He is to be known, for His praise and our comfort! Love delights to be used. Love is wearied with ceremoniousness. It is,

in its way, a trespasser on love's very nature, and on its essential mode of acting. Family affection, for instance, puts ceremony aside all the day long. Intimacy is there, and not form. Form would be too cumbrous for it, as Saul's armour was for David. It has not proved it, and cannot therefore wear it. Love is doing the business of the house in one and another, and the common confidence of all allows it to be done in love's way. So will the Lord have it with Himself. The intimacy of faith is according to His grace, and ceremony is but a weariness to Him.

Grace, as we sing at times, is "a sea without a shore," and we are encouraged to launch forth with full-spread sails. The pot of oil would have been without a bottom, had the woman's faith *still* drawn from it; and the king of Israel's victories would have been in quick succession, till not a Syrian had been left to tell the tale, had his faith trod the field of battle as one who knew it only as a field of conquest. 2 Kings iv. and xiii. But we are straitened. The boldness of faith is too fine an element for the niggard heart of man that cannot trust the Lord: though, blessed to tell it, it is that which *answers*, as well as *uses*, the boundless grace of God.

The believing mind is the happy mind; and it is the obedient mind also, the God-glorifying mind. It is the thankful and the worshipping mind; the mind too that keeps the saint the most in readiness for service, and in separation from pollutions. We may be watchful, and it is right; we may be self-judging, and it is right; we may be careful to observe the rule of righteousness in all that we do, and it is right: but withal, to hold the heart up in the light of the favour of God, by the exercise of a simple, child-like, believing mind, this is what glorifies Him, this is what answers His grace, this is what above all proves itself grateful to Him with whom we have to do. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." It is not attainment, it is not watchfulness, it is not services or duties, which entitle us to take that journey, that gives the soul entrance into that wealthy place of the divine favour--*by faith* we have access into this grace wherein we stand.

But we go onward still in this history, and find it rich in other instructions and illustrations of the life of faith.

Sarah now comes forth for the first time in independent action. Chapters xvi. xvii.

The famine had already, as we saw, tempted Abraham to seek the *land* of Egypt, and he got the resources of that land, with shame and sorrow, and a wearisome journey back again to Canaan. Sarah now tempts him to seek the *bondmaid* of Egypt.

We know what this Egyptian bondmaid is, from the divine teaching of the epistle to the Galatians. She is the covenant from mount Sinai, the law, the religion of ordinances; and Sarah, in her suggestions to Abraham, that he should take this Egyptian, represents *nature*, which always finds its relief and its resources in flesh and blood, finds its *religion* there also, as well as everything else.

The Spirit had not as yet dealt with Sarah's soul. At least, we have had no manifestation of this. She was an elect one surely; but our election goes long before we become the subject of divine workmanship; and, as yet, spiritual life, the life of faith, the operation of the truth on Sarah through the Holy Ghost, had not been witnessed. She had not as yet been spoken of by the Lord. She had not been the companion of her husband in the exercise of his spirit before God, nor his fellow-disciple in God's school. She was not called out with Abraham to number the stars, or to watch the sacrifice. She was still, I may say, in the place of *nature*; and accordingly she invites her husband to give her seed by her Egyptian handmaid.

That is her place in this action; and Abraham becomes the saint *betrayed by nature*, led in nature's path, surprised by a temptation from that quarter now, as he had been before by the pressure of famine.

But all this is unbelief and departure from God. It is the way of man, the way of nature; not of faith or of the Spirit. We naturally resort to the law, the bondwoman, the religion of ordinances, when the *soul* feels its need; as we naturally go down to Egypt, or seek the world, when our *circumstances* are needy. It is unbelief and departure from God, as is seen even in Abraham; but to leave God and the restorings of His grace, when the soul has need, is a more grievous offence and wrong against Him, than to seek help as from Egypt, when our circumstances have need. My poverty may tempt me to use shifts and contrivances, which is bad enough; but if my conscience want healing, if breaches within need repairing, that I may walk again in the enjoyed light of His countenance, and I go to mere religion, or to ordinances, or to anything but the provisions of His own sanctuary, this is still worse.

The Hagars and the Pharaohs, the bondmaids and the wealth of Egypt, are poor resorts for the Abrahams of God. But so it has been, and so it is, through the working of nature. But Abraham (we will now see for our comfort) is under God's eye, though led by Sarah's suggestions. God has His place in him as well as nature; and He will assert it for his restoring. He rises on his soul in a fresh revelation of Himself, demanding of His saint the fresh obedience of faith. "I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." For Abraham's soul had lost this truth, the almightiness or the all-sufficiency of God. He had gone in to Hagar; he had taken up confidence in the flesh; he had left the ground he had stood upon in chap. xv.; but the Lord will not and cannot allow this; and therefore rises, in a renewed revelation of Himself, on the spirit of His saint; and it is a rising "with healing in its wings;" for Abraham falls on his face, convicted and abashed, and the soul is led again in paths of righteousness.

Surely there are to this hour such moments in the history of "them that believe," as well as of their "father Abraham." Abraham had not fallen on his face,

when the Lord appeared to him and spoke to him in chap. xv. There he stood, conscious that he was in the light with the Lord. But darkness had now come over his soul, and he is not ready for the Lord. He is on his face, silent and amazed. He is not standing, urging the suits of faith, as there; but on his face, silent and confounded. The change in his experience is great; but there is no change in the Lord; for it is the same love, whether He rebuke or comfort. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with Him; if we confess our sins, we have forgiveness with Him; if we be able to stand before Him, He will feed and strengthen us; if we must needs fall convicted in His presence, He will raise us up again.

This is a fine, earnest path of the spirit of a saint. There is a deep reality here. Departure from God proves itself to be bitterness; but God proves Himself to the soul to be restoration and peace; and under His gracious hand faith is afresh emboldened, and Abraham plies his suit, as one that was again in the vigour of chap. xv., and seeks of God that Ishmael might live before Him.

How one longs to have one's own soul formed by these blessed revelations of grace, and the inwrought work of faith which answers them. The scene changes; but God and the soul are together still. There is reality--reality in the sadness and in the joy, in the light of the divine countenance and in the hiding of our own face as in the dust.

All this may be said of the life of faith, as seen in chapters xvi. xvii. But on entering upon the next scene of action, in chapters xviii. xix., I would observe, that in the life of Abraham we get something beside these exercises and illustrations of faith. *We get exhibitions of certain divine mysteries also.*

All the facts in this history are simple truths. They happened just as recorded. But there is this twofold design in them: either to give samples of the life of faith in a saint, or to give illustrations of some great ways and purposes of God.

And such illustrations of the divine counsels and mysteries is the common way of divine wisdom throughout Scripture. What was the tabernacle or the temple but a place for the constant rehearsal of mysteries, such as atonement and intercession, and the varied order of God in the worship and services of His house, or in the ministry of grace? For such were the sacrifices and the services there, the feasts, and the holy days, and the jubilees. What, in like manner, were the exodus, and the journey through the wilderness, and the entrance into Canaan, the wars there, and then the throne of the peaceful one? Were not all these, whether institutes of the sanctuary, or facts in the history, exhibitions of the hidden, eternal counsels of the divine bosom?

Now chapters xviii. xix. of this history suggest this recollection. These chapters are to be read together, and afford us a large and vivid exhibition of

certain great truths, which concern us at this moment, in as full a sense as ever the facts themselves, which convey them to us as in a parable, concerned Abraham and his generation.

Sodom, in that day, was the *world*. It had been warned, but had refused instruction. It had proved incurably departed from God, and beyond correction. Sodom had been visited and chastened in the day of the victory of the confederated kings--as we saw in chapter xiv.; but it was Sodom still, and was, at this time, in advanced iniquity, in a state of ripened apostasy, her last state worse than her first.

Sodom was the *world* in this day. The Lord Jesus, in His teaching, gives it morally that place, just as another generation had been the world in Noah's day. See Matt. xxiv.; Luke xvii. They are like figures, presenting to our thoughts "this present evil world," which is ripening itself for the judgment of God.

At such a crisis, however, in this day of the judgment of Sodom, or the overthrow of the cities of the plain, as in every other like day, there are two incidental matters to be deeply pondered by our souls; there is *deliverance out of the judgment*, and there is *separation before it come*. There is Lot, and there is Abraham. Lot is delivered, when the hour of the crisis comes; Abraham is separated before it comes.

All this is much to be weighed in our thoughts. *Judgment*, *deliverance*, *separation*--these are the elements of the action here, and these are full of meaning, and of application to our own history as the Church of God, and to the world around us.

Before this action opens, Abraham had been in a heavenly place. He was a stranger on the earth, having his tent only, and wandering from place to place without so much as to set his foot on; and now, when the judgment comes, he is apart from it altogether, like Enoch, the heavenly Enoch, in another and earlier day of judgment. Each of these, in the day of visitation, was outside, beyond, or above the scene of the ruin; not merely delivered out of it when it came, but separated from it before it came.

Abraham had already stood with the Lord Himself on an eminence which overlooked Sodom, as he and the Lord had walked together from the plain of Mamre; and now, when the judgment spends itself on that apostate, polluted city, Abraham is again, in that high place, beholding the desolation afar off. He was (in the spirit of the place where he stood) in company with Him who was executing the judgment. But Lot is only rescued. Lot is a delivered man, Abraham is a separated one. As Abraham is the Enoch, Lot is the Noah of this later day, and is drawn forth from the devoted city.

What mysteries are these! What solemn realities, in the counsels of God, are here rehearsed for our learning! Do we know what we are looking at in all

this? Do we not see great purposes of God, as in a glass, in this varied and eventful action? Have we to ask, Where is this mystic ground, on which we are here standing? Surely, beloved, we ought to know it. In this action, the world, as Sodom, is typically meeting its doom; the righteous remnant, as in Lot, are delivered in that hour of wrath; and the Church, as in Abraham, already separated and borne above, looks afar off on the scene of the mighty desolation. Surely these mysteries are before us in this action at Sodom. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." The world, the Church, and the kingdom, are here in mysteries or types; the thing that is to be judged; the thing that is to be separated to heavenly glory; the thing that is to be delivered, and thus reserved for the earth again after the purification. Enoch, Noah, and the deluged creation are again here in Abraham, and Lot, and the doomed cities of the plain.

These are mysteries of which the Book of God is full. And thus is it again and afresh witnessed to us, what we are and where we are, though travelling on, to all appearance, in the common track of everyday human life, with a generation, in the spirit of their mind, still, as ever, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Many incidental things might occur to the mind in this, as in other sections of this wonderful history; such as the visit of the Son of God to Abraham; Abraham's intercession for Sodom; the angels' reserve towards Lot; and the contrasted characters of the two saints--the saint of the tent, and the saint in Sodom. But my purpose, in this little book, does not take in such details. But I would ask, in closing this action in chapters xviii. xix. Are we, beloved, apprehensive of the moment in which we are living? Is "man's day" brightening up to its meridian before us, ascending to its noontide splendour? And what think we of that? Are we joining in the congratulations of man with his fellow, that thus it is? Or is all this brightness suspected and challenged by us, as the sure precursor of God's judgment? Do we know that the god of this world finds a house "swept and garnished" as thoroughly a scene for his evil and destructive energy as a Sodom? Do we judge, with our generation, that this cannot be? Or do we hold it in mind, that it is in such a house that he will work at the closing of Christendom's history? And are we waiting for the Son of God to take us up to that mystic eminence where of old He took His Abraham? The Lord give us grace to occupy such ground! And we shall the more easily and naturally do so, if, like Abraham, we are saints of the tent and not of the city--such saints (again like Abraham) as rejoice, "in the heat of the day," to hold communion with the Lord of glory.

After this we go, with our patriarch, into the land of the Philistines, where he sojourns during the times of chapters xx. xxi.

The old compact between Abraham and Sarah is acted on again, after so

long a time--acted on now at Gerar, as before it had been in Egypt. It had been made between them ere they left their native country. It was brought out with them from the very place of their birth. It was, I may say, in them older than anything of God; and after many changes and exercises it is in them and with them the same thing still.

It was a very evil thing--both subtle and unclean. It was false and yet specious, and savoured strongly of the serpent, of him that is a liar and the father of lies. Abraham was forced to betray it, vile as it was, to the king of Gerar. "It came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother." This was worse than we might even have feared. There was not a principle in the life of faith that was not gainsaid by so vile a compact as this, brought from the very place of their nativity with them. And such is the flesh, the inbred corruption. Its way, whenever taken, is shame and deep dishonour. It degrades a saint even before men. It is that which will confound and expose an Abraham before an Abimelech. And it never changes, or improves, or ceases to be. It is the same in Egypt, and at Gerar. It lives in us still, and follows us everywhere. We get it at our birth from the loins of Adam; and we are, for the common consistency of our way as the called of God, to mortify and refuse it.

Wretched indeed it is to have to see such a thing as this. But the Spirit of God hides nothing. There it lies before us, this vile and wicked thing, in the pathway of the recording Spirit. We have, however, other happier objects.

The progress of Sarah's soul, under the light and leading of the Lord, is to be tracked in its own peculiar and instructive path. Under the influence of the flesh she had, at the outset, joined Abraham in this unclean compact, of which I have just spoken. In unbelief, she had afterwards, as we also saw, given Hagar to her husband; and then, in the haste and rebellion of the heart, she resented the effects of that unbelief, and cast out the bondwoman, whom she had adopted and settled in the family. But at the command of the Lord, Hagar had gone back to her; and now, at the time of this action, she had borne with her in the house for fourteen years. There was, however, no manifestation of the renewed mind, or the life of faith, in her. It was even during these years, that in unbelief she had laughed at the promise, behind the tent-door. But still, I may say, she had, during this time, in one sense, *been at school*; and she seems to have learnt a lesson, for she submitted patiently and unresistingly, to the presence of the bondwoman and her child in the house of her husband. We hear of no fresh quarrels between them. This was something. This was witness of her being in the hand of God, till at length, as we know, she was given faith to conceive seed. Heb. xi. A great journey, however, after all this, is now about to be taken by her spirit. She is to take the lead even

of her husband. And happy this is--common enough, too, among the saints--but happy, very happy. And were we of a delivered heart--a heart given up to the desire of Christ's glory only--we should rejoice in these discoveries, made in the regions of the Spirit, though we ourselves would have to be humbled by them. "The last shall be first, and the first last." These are among the ways of "new-born souls," and to be discerned still by those who "mark the steps of grace." Paul could say of some, "Who also were in Christ before me;" but we may be bold to add, in that case, though he did not, "The last were first." And the generous liberty of the redeemed soul will but glory in these sovereign actings of the Spirit.

Sarah's elevation above Abraham in the things of the kingdom of God is now to appear in illustration of all this. In obedience to the command, Abraham calls the child that was born, Isaac. But Sarah *interprets* that name: and this is a finer exercise of soul over the gift of God. To obey a word is good; but to obey it in the joy of an exercised heart, and in the light and intelligence of a mind that has entered into the divine sense of that word, is better. Abraham called the child that was born to him, Isaac: but Sarah said "God has made me to laugh; and all they that hear it will laugh with me." The oracle of chapter xvii. 19 was made more to her than a command to be observed. It had springs of refreshing in it, and kindlings of soul. It was full of light and meaning to the opened understanding of Sarah. And this leads to strength and decision. This Deborah of earlier days will brace the loins of Barak. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son," says Sarah to Abraham; for she was happy in the liberty of grace and promise, while he was still lingering amid the claims of nature, and the desires which his own loins had gendered. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." And this was *Scripture*, as we read in Gal. iv.; this was the voice of God. This decision of faith, in the liberty of grace, gets its sealing at once under God's own hand. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," says the Spirit. And what met the mind of the Lord, in the days of His flesh, like the faith which was bold and free, after this manner? the faith which would use Him without ceremony, which reached Him through a crowd, which pressed in through the silent reproaches of a misjudging Pharisee, or through the injurious whispers of a self-righteous multitude! And how much of the energy of the Spirit in St. Paul is engaged in giving the sinner this precious boldness, this immediate assurance of heart in Christ, in spite of law, conscience, earth, and hell!

This boldness of faith in Sarah, this challenge of the bondwoman, this demand (in her own behalf too) that she might enjoy her Isaac all alone, is *Scripture*. Gal. iv. 30. She spake as "the oracles of God." But in Abraham nature now acts. He would fain retain Ishmael. This is no strange thing. Nature now acts in Abraham, and faith in Sarah; as, on an earlier occasion, which we noticed, nature had acted

in Sarah and faith in Abraham. But nature in Abraham must submit. He must not let Sarah be entangled any longer as with this yoke of bondage. The house must be freed of Ishmael, for it is to be built only in Isaac. "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

But all this quickly bears its fruit. Hagar being now gone, and the house settled in Isaac according to this demand of faith, glory is therefore quickly ready to enter. For this is the divine order. Having "access into this grace wherein we stand, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Such is the order of the Spirit in the soul of such a saint; and such is the order now in the mystic house of our Abraham.

Abraham is sought by the Gentile. This is full of meaning. In the days of stress and famine, Abraham seeks the Gentile, whether in Egypt or in Philistia; but now, the Gentile seeks Abraham. This is a great change. Abraham's house, as we have seen, is now established in grace. Ishmael is dismissed, and Isaac is gloried in. In mystic sense, Israel has turned to the Lord, the veil is taken away, Jerusalem has said to Christ, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," her warfare is therefore accomplished, and she is receiving the double. The Gentile seeks Israel. Abimelech and Phichol, the king and his chief captain, come to Abraham.

This is a great dispensational change. Israel is the head now, and not the tail. The skirt of the Jew is now laid hold on by the nations; for the Jew has, by faith, laid hold on the Lord, and the nations say, God is with you. Chap. xxi. 22; Zech. viii. 23.

This is full of meaning; and Abraham on all this (led of the Spirit) is full of thoughts of glory or of the kingdom. And rightly so. Because, when the Jew is sought by the Gentile, instead of being trodden down or degraded by the Gentile, the kingdom is at hand. Accordingly, on the king of Gerar seeking him and suing him, our patriarch raises a *new* altar; not the altar of a heavenly stranger, as in chapter xii., but an altar to "the everlasting God;" not an altar in a wilderness-world, but an altar beside a *grove* and a *well*; the one being a witness that the solitary place had been made glad, and that the wilderness was rejoicing; the other, that the peoples of the earth were confederate with the seed of Abraham.[11]

All this bright intelligence of faith in Abraham is very beautiful. We have already seen other actings of it in him. He knew a time of peace and a time of war, and acted accordingly in the day of the battle of the five kings with four. So, again, he knew his heavenly place, and took it, when the fire of the Lord was judging the cities of the plain. So, again, as this chapter xxi. very remarkably shows us,

[11]The Lord Jesus, in His day, acknowledged this same pledge or symptom of the kingdom. For when the Greeks came up to the feast and asked to see Him, as the Gentile here seeks Abraham, His thoughts are immediately upon His glory. He knows indeed that glory is to be reached only by His death, and so He testifies; but still, His thoughts go out at once to the glory. See John xii. 23.

he also knew when to suffer wrong and when to resent, when to be passive and when to assert his rights. For now, in the time of this chapter, when the Gentile seeks him, he reproves Abimelech for a well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. *But he had not complained of this injury until now*; for Abimelech said to him, "I wot not who has done this thing; neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to-day." And this is exceedingly beautiful. It is perfect in its generation. Abraham had till now suffered, and taken it patiently, because till now he had been a heavenly stranger on the earth; and such patient suffering in such an one is acceptable with God. But now, times are changed. The heavenly stranger has become the head of the nations, sought by the Gentile; and rights and wrongs must now be settled, and the cry of the oppressed must be heard.

All this has great moral beauty in it. I know not how sufficiently to admire this workmanship of the Spirit in the mind of Abraham. He was an Israelite who knew the seasons of the year--when to be at the Passover, and when at the Feast of Tabernacles. He knew, in spirit, when to continue with Jesus in His temptations, and then again, when the day arrived, how to surround Him with hosannahs as He entered the city of the Son of David. All such various and blending lights shone in the spiritual intelligence of his soul. God, by the Spirit, communicated a beautiful mind to Abraham. In other days, he would not have so much of this earth as to set his foot on--he would surrender the choice of the land to Lot--he would leave the Canaanite where he found him--he would refuse to be enriched by the king of Sodom even in so little as a thread or a shoe-latchet--he would wander up and down in his tent here, a stranger from heaven--but now, in a day signified and marked by the hand of God, he can be another man, and know his millennial place, as father of the Israel of God, and their representative as head of the nations. He can keep the Feast of Tabernacles in its season. His rebuke of Abimelech--his entertaining him--his enriching him--his giving him covenant pledges--and all this in such easy, conscious dignity--and then his new altar or his calling on God in a new character, and his planting a grove, all bespeak another man, and that a transfiguration, if I may so speak, had taken place in him, according to God.

All this I judge to have a great character in it. But I will not any longer stay here; for there is still more in this fine life of faith which our father Abraham, through grace, tracked to the very end, holding still the beginning of his confidence.

And here let me say, this life of faith is, in other words, life spent in the *power of resurrection*. It is the life of a dead and risen man. It is a lesson, if one may speak for others, hard indeed to be learnt to any good effect, but still it is the lesson, the practical lesson of our lives, that we are a dead and risen people. At the outset Abraham, in spirit, took that character. He left behind him all that

nature or the world had provided him with. He left what his *birth* introduced him to, for that which *faith* introduced him to. And as he began, so he continued and ended, with failings by the way indeed, and that too again and again, but still to the end he was a man of faith, a dead and risen man.

As such an one he had received Isaac, some twenty years ago, not considering his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; and as such an one he now offers him on the altar at the word of the Lord. The promise was *God's*--that was enough for him. For *faith* is never overcome. It has divine, infinite resources. The believer fails again and again; but faith is never overcome, or comes short of its expectation. xxii.

This is the way of faith, when Isaac was demanded.[12] And the same overcoming faith we trace in the very next scene, the burial of Sarah. This was the same faith, the faith of a dead and risen man, the faith which had already *received* Isaac, and *offered* Isaac, now buries Sarah. Abraham believed in resurrection, and in God as the God of resurrection, the God who quickens the dead, and calls those things that be not as though they were. The cave of Machpelah tells us this. "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, *in sure and certain hope*," was the language of Abraham's heart there. His purchase of that place, with all his care to make it his own, to have it as his *possession*, while beyond it he cared not for a single acre of the whole land, tells us of his faith in resurrection. His treaty for it with the children of Heth is like his words to his servants at the foot of mount Moriah, "Abide ye here with the ass, while I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Each of these things bespoke beforehand what he knew about his Isaac and his Sarah. He committed each of them into the hands of Him who, as he knew, quickens the dead. The corn of wheat dying, as he knew, was to live again. The handful of sacred dust, as he knew, was to be gathered again. Death itself was eyed in like victory of faith, as had already been eyed the fire, and the wood, and the beloved victim on the altar. xxiii.

These were the victories of faith again. Faith in our patriarch, after this manner, talked calmly with all circumstances, and won the day over them all in their turn. Beautiful victories of "precious faith"! And they are gained still. Faith still disposes of one circumstance after another as it rises. It meets our own personal condition as "dead in trespasses and sins;" it meets the difficulties and temptations of the way; it meets the last great enemy. Let me not make a wonder of meeting things on the journey, or at the end of it, if I have already met what withstood

[12]There are *mysteries* as well as *illustrations of faith* in these things; but I cannot follow them here. The offer of Isaac on Moriah, we none of us doubt, is a mystery. So, I surely know, is the action of Hagar and Ishmael in chapter xxi. It is the picture of the present *outcast* but *preserved* Jew--a homeless fugitive, destined, however, for future purposes of mercy. See Gal. iv. 25. But I follow not these things particularly here.

me at the outset. Faith will go to mount Moriah, or to the cave of Machpelah, if it have already gone out in the starry night with the Lord at Hebron. If it have met death in my own person, it may meet it in my Isaac or my Sarah. One speaks, the Lord knows, of His grace, and not of one's own experience. But still, beloved, let each of us say, Am I not at peace with God? Do I not know that He is for me? Do I not know that my estate of sin, guilt, and condemnation has been met in His grace? Do I not know that I am washed, accepted, adopted? Have I not gone out with Abraham, as in the night of chap. xv., and found relief for my own state by nature, and shall I then tarry on my way, though the trial of mount Moriah await me, or the death and burial at Machpelah? If faith have already met sin, it is to know itself conqueror over even death. Let our souls be accustomed to the thought that the *brightest victory of faith was achieved at the beginning*--that if at peace with God in spite of sin, we may reckon on strength and comfort from Him in spite of the trials of the way, and on power and triumph in Him in spite of the end of it. Faith which has done its *first* work has done its *greatest* work. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." God is glorified in these reckonings of faith. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

It is the power of life over death, life in victory, that faith uses. It was such power of victorious life that Abraham possessed himself of by faith. The sepulchre is empty, and the grave-clothes are lying there, as the spoils of war. The deadness of his own body, the altar of his Isaac, and the grave of his Sarah, were visited and inspected by a *risen* man, in the light of the faith of Him who is the Quickener of the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were.

These are the great things of faith in the souls of the elect. But further still, in this fruitful, shifting history. Abraham, at the end, is seen to hold his first ground, as well as to work his earlier victories. He maintains, through grace, erect and firm, that very attitude which he had at once and at the first assumed, when by faith he hearkened to the call of God.

That call of God had done these two things with Abraham, I might say *for* Abraham; it had separated him from Mesopotamia, and yet left him a stranger in Canaan. From country, kindred, and father's house he had been withdrawn; but still, in the midst of that land and people to which he had come, he was to be but a pilgrim, dwelling as on the surface of it, in a tent, whatever part of it he might pass through or visit.

This position was very holy. His separation was twofold--separation from pollution, such as he might meet in Canaan; separation from natural alliances, such as he had been born into in Mesopotamia. He was under the call of the God of glory; and such a call made no terms with either the flesh or the world. In

somewhat of Levite holiness, he did not know his mother's children; in somewhat of church holiness, he knew no man after the flesh. Nay; beyond even all this, in somewhat of the virtue of his divine Lord, he did not know *himself*. He was the heir of the land where he was a pilgrim. The *promise* of God was his, as surely as the *call*. He knew himself to be destined of divine, unimpeachable purpose, to dignities of a very high order. But to the end he was willing to pass unknown, entirely unknown. He talked of himself to the children of the land only as a stranger and a sojourner. He would pay for the smallest plot of ground which he wanted. He would be nothing and nobody in the midst of them. He never talked of the dignities which he knew, all the time, really attached to him. David, in like spirit, in other days, had the oil of Samuel on him, the consecration of God to the throne of the tribes of Israel; and yet he would be hid, and thank a rich neighbour, in his need, for a piece of bread. These men of God knew not themselves. This was the way of our Abraham; and this was the virtue of Him who, in this same departed, evil world, made Himself of no reputation, though God of heaven and earth.

Blessed virtues of soul under the power of the call of God, through the Holy Ghost! Mesopotamia is left, Canaan is estranged, and self is forgotten and hid! The call of God purposes to do at this day with us what in that day it did with Abraham. It would fain conform us to itself. Its authority is supreme. It is not that country or kindred are, of necessity, defiling. Nature accredits them; and the law of God, in its season, owns and enforces them. But the call of God is supreme, and demands separation of a very high, and fine, and peculiar order. And this was what addressed Abraham when he dwelt in Mesopotamia, the place of his birth, of his kindred, and of his natural associations, and this was what still echoed in his heart all the time of his sojourn in Canaan.

It was not that he was called to assert the *harm* of such things. Not at all. But they were such things as the call of God left behind; and the harm, or the moral wrong, or the pollution of a thing was no longer his rule, but *inconsistency with the call of God*. He may allow the right and the claim of a thousand things; but it is the voice of the God of glory, to which in faith he had hearkened already, that must lead him and command him. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

He was very true to his call. According to it, at the beginning, he had gone forth, not knowing, as before him, whither he went, and leaving, as behind him, all that even nature itself must accredit, and all but the sovereign pleasure of God sanction. He continued in the power of it, sojourning in tents, unknown and unendowed, a stranger in the world, refusing to take one backward step. And at the end, we find the same power of his call as fresh in his soul as ever--as earnest and as simple in chap. xxiv. as it had been in chap. xii. He charges Eliezer to act upon it to the full, as he himself at the outset had done--that is, he was to

keep Isaac in the place of separation at all cost. Let come what may, Isaac was neither to be taken back to Mesopotamia, nor to be allied with Canaan. He was, let circumstances make it difficult as they may, to be maintained in his true place under the call of God.

This has a great character in it. There is another mystery in this exquisite chapter (xxiv.), as we commonly know; but I do not notice it here. I rather design to trace the earnest, simple path, which faith trod from first to last, in our father Abraham. The voice of the God of glory was *still* heard by him. He was *still* the separated man. He declared plainly that he sought a heavenly country. He might have had opportunity to return. This very journey of Eliezer proved that he had not forgotten the road. But he did not, he would not.

This strangership of our patriarch in the earth has indeed a very fine character. He left Mesopotamia, he sojourned in Canaan, he hid or forgot himself! Abraham left Abraham behind, as well as country, kindred, and father's house. He made himself of no reputation. He spoke of himself as "a stranger and a sojourner," and as that only, in the audience of the children of Heth, though he was, all the while, the one "who had the promises." All this was real, true-hearted strangership in the world. And it was conscious citizenship in heaven that made him, after this manner, a willing stranger here. Because of possessions in prospect, he could do without them in hand. The land of promise was to him but a strange country, because it was but a land of promise and not of possession. He saw Christ's day, and was glad; but he saw it in the distance. Heb. xi. 9-14.

And Abraham was all this to the very end--as these closing chapters show us. The character which he took up at the beginning, under the call of God, that character he maintained to the end. He fails in the power of faith along the road, again and again, but he is the same heavenly stranger to the end of his journey.[13]

And strangership of this order is ours, I am deeply assured. Ours is to be strangership in the earth, because of conscious and well-known citizenship in heaven; separation from the world, because of oneness with an already risen Christ. Nothing can alter this while we are on the earth. We ought so to look in the face of a *rejected* Christ as to maintain this strangership in power. And so we do, as far as Christ is of more value to us than all our circumstances. It is for want of this that we take up with the world as we do. We have not learnt the

[13]In the mystic history of the earth given to us in Lev. xxiii. the Church is brought in as the "poor" and the "stranger" gleaning in another man's field, in ver. 22. But as she entered that field so she left it. She was the poor one, and the stranger, and the gleaner in another's field, to the end. The field never becomes her property.

Looked at in the light of this beautiful figure, what is Christendom under God's eye?

lesson that Moses learnt--that the reproach of Christ was greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

Hard but blessed. Abraham knew something of it in power. He was the stranger to the end. He might have returned to Mesopotamia. He had not forgotten the road, as we observed before; and the constant respect and friendliness of all his neighbours proved that there was no enemy to hinder the journey. But the call of God had fixed his heart, and he looked only where it led him.[14]

Would that the soul held these things in increased power! Little indeed does the heart know of this, if one may speak for others. But they are real--the prized fruit of divine energy in the elect of God.

After all this we find another and distinct matter in the history of Abraham. I mean his marriage with Keturah, and his family by her.

This family by Keturah is, we may surely judge, a distinct mystery. That is, Abraham is here presenting a new feature of the divine wisdom, or illustrating another secret in the ways of the divine dispensations. In these children of the second wife we get (typically) the millennial nations, the nations which shall people the earth in the days of the kingdom, branches of the great family of God in that day, and children of Abraham. They may lie far off, as in the ends of the earth; but they shall have their allotments, and be owned as of the one extended millennial family. "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people," shall be said to them. The ends of the earth shall be Christ's inheritance then, as surely as the Church shall be glorified in Him and with Him in the heavens, and the throne of David, and the inheritance of Israel be His, as set up and revived in the land of their fathers. Abraham's children will be all the world over.

For in that day of glory, the King of Israel shall be the God of the whole earth. Christ is the Father of the everlasting age. If Israel be honoured by Him, all the nations shall be blest in Him. He is "the light to lighten the Gentiles," as He is "the glory of His people Israel." Keturah's children, parcelled off in other lands, bespeak this mystery. They will be second to Israel, it is true; but, nevertheless, they will be elect and beloved. As it is here written: And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. xxv.[15]

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[14]The Lord Jesus, in the days of His flesh, acted as the God who, of old, had called Abraham. *For He put in the supreme claims of such an one.* "He that loveth father or mother more than Me," says He, "is not worthy of Me." And again, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead." Who but God can step in between us and such relationships, such obligations and services? Duties and affections like these are more than sanctioned by nature; they are enforced by law--law of God Himself. But the call of God is supreme, and Jesus asserted it in the day of His humiliation here.

[15]The same mystery, I doubt not, is presented in the marriage of Moses and the Ethiopian, and in that also of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter. Moses' second wife stands, in dignity, below his

This is, I believe, the mystic meaning of this new family of Abraham; and this strange and wondrous article is that which closes his history. But it is another witness of the large and varied testimony which God has borne to His own counsels and secrets in that history. And this is very remarkable. At times *the Father* is seen in Abraham--as, in his desire for children--his making a feast at the weaning of Isaac--his offering up of his son--his sending for a wife for his son; at other times *the Christ* is seen in him, as the one in whom all the families of the earth are to be blest--as the kinsman-redeemer of Israel--as the holder of the headship of the nations--father of the millennial or everlasting age--and then, at other times, *the Church*, or heavenly people, are traced or reflected in this wondrous story; and, at other times, we are on earth, or with *Israel*.

We have the Blessed One, unto whom all His works are known from the beginning of the world, in the details and changeful stories of this life of Abraham, thus showing forth parts of His ways. In the allegories of Sarah and her seed, of Hagar and her seed, of Keturah and her seed, we have the mystery of Jerusalem, "the mother of us all," Israel in bondage as she now is with her children, and the gathering of the nations all the world over, as branches of the one extended millennial family. Mystery after mystery is thus acted in the life of Abraham; and many and various parts of "the manifold wisdom of God" are taught us.

I am quite aware, that *living or personal* types may have been as unconscious of what they were, under God's hand, as *material* types. Hagar, no doubt, was as passive as the gold that overlaid the table of shew-bread, or as the water which filled the brazen laver. But the lesson to us is not affected by this. I have Christ's royal glory in the state of Solomon, and I have the deeply precious provisions of His grace in the golden plate on Aaron's forehead; and I no more think of enquiring about Solomon himself in that matter than I do about the gold. The sleeping Adam teaches me about the death of the Christ of God; the waking rapture of Adam, on receiving Eve, teaches me about the satisfaction and joy of the same Christ of God, when He shall see of the travail of His soul; but whether Adam knew what he was doing for me, I do not ask myself. I can learn about the first covenant from an unconscious Hagar, as I can learn about the cleansing of the blood of Christ from an unconscious altar. So, as to our Abraham, in taking his place in the midst of all these varied and wondrous mysteries, I enquire not curiously the measure of his mind in these things. The wisdom of God can say--the Christ who stood in the eternal counsels can say, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders;" but how far Abraham could speak so, in whatever measure he was himself in the secret he was

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Zipporah, who shines in peculiar glory at the mount of God in Exodus xviii.; and Pharaoh's daughter, though fully acknowledged by the king at Jerusalem, would not be given a place in the city of David.

made to utter, or whether he spoke mysteries as in an unknown tongue, we have not to enquire. "God is His own interpreter."

Our patriarch has now closed his actings and his exercises. We have now to close his eyes, as we read in chap. xxv. 7, 8, "And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people."

He had, we may say, seen the land, but he was not to go over and possess it. He was the Moses of an earlier generation; like him, a *heavenly* man, a man of the wilderness and not of the inheritance--a man of the tent--a child of resurrection. He was gathered to his people, ere the land was entered by the Israel of God according to promise. As in the glass of God's purpose, and by the light of faith, he sees the land; but he goes not over to possess it. He dies as on Mount Pisgah, on the wilderness-side of the Jordan, destined, with Enoch before him and with Moses after him, to shine on the top of the hill in the heavenly glory of the Son of man.

We have now closed the third section of the Book of Genesis; and, with it, the scenes and circumstances of the life of Abraham.

In the midst of these fragments, thus gathered and treasured up for us by the Holy Ghost, we have seen faith getting its victories, knowing its rights and pleading its titles, practising its generosity, enjoying its fellowships, making its surrenders, and obtaining its consolations and promises. But we have seen also its *intelligence*, and learnt it to be such a thing as walks in the light, or according to the judgment, of the mind of Christ.

There is something very beautiful in such a sight as this. We do not commonly witness this fine combination--the *intelligence* of faith, and the *moral power* of faith. In some saints, there is the earnest, urgent power of faith, which goes on right truthfully and honestly, but with many a mistake as to the dispensational wisdom of God. In others, there is a mind nicely taught, endowed with much priestly, spiritual skill, in following the wisdom of God in ages and dispensations, but with lack of power in all that service which a simpler and more earnest faith would be constantly pursuing. But in Abraham we see these things combined.

In our walk with God, the light of the knowledge of His mind should be seen, as well as our hearts be ever found open to His presence and joy, and our consciences alive to His claims and His will. The life of faith is a very incomplete thing, if we know not, as Abraham knew, the times as signified of God, when to fight, as it were, and when to be still; when to be silent under the wrongs of an Abimelech, and when to resent them; when to raise the altar of a sojourning

stranger, and when to call on the name of the everlasting God. In other words, we ought to know what the Lord is about, according to His own eternal purpose, and what He is leading onward to its consummation, in His varied and fruitful wisdom.

Such is the nature of all obedience; for the conduct of the saint is ever to be according to the dispensed wisdom of God at the time, or in the given age.

But, let me add, the highest point of moral dignity in Abraham was this: that he was *a stranger in the earth.*

This, I may say, outshines all. It was this that made God not *ashamed* to be called his God. God can *morally* own the soul that advisedly refuses citizenship in this revolted, corrupted world.

This was the highest point in moral dignity in Abraham.

God loveth the stranger. Deut. x. 18. He loves the *poor*, *unfriended* stranger, with the love of pity and of grace, and provides for him. But with the *separated* stranger, who has turned his back on this polluted scene, God links His name and His honour, and morally owns such without shame. Heb. xi. 13-16.

How finely he started on his journey at the beginning! The Lord and His promises were all he had. He left, as we have seen, his *natural* home behind him, but he did not expect to find *another* home in the place he was going to. He knew that he was to be a stranger and sojourner with God in the earth. Mesopotamia was left, but Canaan was not taken up in the stead of it. Accordingly, from all the people there, he was a separated man all his days, or during his sojourn among them of about one hundred years. Canaan was the *world* to that heavenly man, and he had as little to do with it or to say to it as he might, though all the while in it. When circumstances demanded it, or as far as business involved him, he dealt with it. He would traffic with the people of the land, if need were (to be sure he would), but his sympathies were not with them. He needed a burying-place, and he purchased it of the children of Heth. He would not think of hesitating to treat with them about a necessary matter of bargain and sale; but he would rather *buy* than *receive.* He was loth to be debtor to them, or to be enriched by them--nor were they his *companions.* This we observe throughout. If Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre--it may be morally attracted by what they saw in him--seek confederacy with him, he will not refuse their alliance on a given occasion of the common interest, when such interest the God who had called him would sanction or commend. But still the Canaanites were not his company. His wife was his company, his household, his flocks and his herds, and his fellow-saint, Lot, his brother's son, who had come out of Mesopotamia with him--as long, at least, as such an one walked as a separated man in Canaan. But even *he*, when undistinguished from the people of the land, is a stranger to him as well and as fully as they.

All this has surely a voice in our ears. Angels were Abraham's company at times, and so the Lord of angels--and at all times, his altar and his tent were with him, and the mysteries or truths of God, as they were made known to him. But the people of the land, the men of the world, did not acquire his tastes or sympathies, or share his confidence. He was *among* them but not *of* them--and rather would he have had his house unbuilt, and Isaac be without a wife, than that such wife should be a daughter of Canaan.

To some of us, beloved, this breaking up of natural things is terrible. But if Jesus were loved more, all this would be the easier reckoned on. If His value for us *within the veil* were more pondered in our hearts and treasured up there, we should go to Him *without the camp* with firmer, surer step. "I have learnt," said one of the martyrs, "that there is no freedom like that of the heart that has given up all for Christ--no wisdom like that learnt at His feet--no poetry like the calm foreseeing of the glory that shall be."

Of our Abraham and his companions in this life of faith, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, it is written, "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country--and truly if they had been mindful of that from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned, but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city."

Beloved, we are called to be these strangers--strangers such as God can thus morally own. If the world were not Abraham's object, we ought to feel, even on higher sanctions, that it cannot be ours. The call of the God of glory made Abraham a stranger here--the cross of Christ, in addition to that, may still more make us strangers. As we sometimes sing--

> "Before His cross we now are left,
> As strangers in the land."

"Ye are dead," says the apostle, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." That is strangership of the highest order--the strangership of the Son of God Himself. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

In the strength of this strangership in the world, may we have grace to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul"! and in the strength of our conscious citizenship in heaven may "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His

glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

ISAAC.

GENESIS XXV.-XXVII.

In the former papers, entitled ENOCH, NOAH, and ABRAHAM, I have followed the course of the Book of Genesis, down to the end of chapter xxiv. I now propose to take it up from thence, and follow it on through chapters xxv.-xxvii.; Isaac, after Abraham, being the principal person there.

There is, however, but little in his history, and little in his character. In some respects this is no matter; for, whether much or little, his name is in the recollection of us all who have learnt the ways of the God of grace, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," which is His name for ever, His memorial unto all generations. Exod. iii.

Isaac was a stranger in the earth, a heavenly stranger, as his father had been, and we see him with his tent and his altar, as we saw Abraham; and we hear the Lord giving him the promises, as He had given them to Abraham.

"By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."

This tent-life of the patriarchs had a great character in it. Hebrews xi. 9, 10 teaches us this. It tells us that the fathers were content to live upon the surface of this world. A tent has no foundations. It is pitched or struck at a moment's warning. And such a slight and passing connection with this earth, and life upon it, these patriarchs were satisfied to have and seek only. They did not look for a city or for foundations, till God became a Builder. Till His building was manifested they were sojourners here, just crossing the plain, or surface of the earth, without striking their roots into it.

This is the voice that is heard from the tents of these pilgrim-fathers. And as their tents bespoke this heavenly strangership, their altars bespoke their worship, their *true* worship; for they raised their altar to Him who had *appeared* to them. They did not affect to find out God by their wisdom, and then worship Him in the light and dictate of their own thoughts. They did not, thus, in the common folly, profess themselves to be wise; but they knew God and worshipped God

only according to His revelation of Himself. Therefore it was not an altar "to the unknown God" at which they served; but they served or worshipped in truth. And in its generation the patriarchal *altar* was, in this way, as beautiful as the patriarchal *tent*. The latter put them into due relationship to the world around them, the former to the Lord God of heaven and earth who was above them.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alike in all this. There was, therefore, no new dispensational secret, no fresh purpose of the divine counsels, revealed in Isaac, as there had been in Abraham.[16] This is so. But still, though there was no new dispensational scene unfolded, there was a further unfolding of the glories that attach to the dispensation or calling which had been already made known in Abraham. And a very important one too--such as, if we had divine affections, we should deeply prize. I mean this: The heavenly calling or strangership on earth was the *common* thing; but characteristically, *election* was illustrated in Abraham, and *sonship* or adoption in Isaac.

God called Abraham from the world, from kindred, country, and father's house, separating him to Himself and to His promises. But Isaac was already as one chosen and called and sanctified, while in the house of his father. He was at home from his birth, and he was there with God, having been born according to promise, and through an energy that quickened the dead; and in all these things he represented *sonship*, as Abraham had represented *election*. In Isaac we see that family that is "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and who stand in liberty; as the apostle says, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." We are Abraham's seed, so many Isaacs, children of the freewoman, or in the adoption, if we be Christ's.

Now this mystery of sonship or adoption represented in Isaac, as the mystery of election had been made known in Abraham, is in divine order. For *the election of God is unto adoption*, as we read, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself;" and this being so, this high, personal prerogative being represented in Isaac, in the course of his history we get the mystery of the son of the freewoman very blessedly, largely exhibited.

For we get both the *birth* and the *weaning*. And each of these events was the occasion of joy in the house of the father. The child born was called "laughter," the child weaned was celebrated by a feast.

Wondrous and gracious secrets these are. It is the father's joy to *have children*, it is his further joy that his children should *know themselves to be children*. This was the birth and the weaning of Isaac in the Book of Genesis. And all this, after so long a time, is revived in the Epistle to the Galatians. For what was repre-

[16]See the paper on "Enoch," pp. 32-37, where certain dispensational purposes of God, in their differences, are considered.

sented in Isaac is realized in us through the Spirit. In that epistle we learn that we are children by faith in Christ Jesus. And there we learn also that, being children, we receive the spirit of children. We are *weaned* as well as *born*. Paul travailed in birth for them again, as he says: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The Christ of this passage is Christ *the Son*; and Paul longed and laboured that they might be brought into the Isaac-state, the liberty of conscious adoption. They were under temptation to feed again upon the ordinances which gendered bondage, and which the tutors and governors of an earlier dispensation had enjoined. But opposed to this, the apostle would draw them again into liberty, as he himself had proved the virtue of it in his own soul. It had pleased God, as he says, to reveal the Son in him. The life he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of *the Son*, who loved him. He could, therefore, go down to Arabia, where he had no flesh and blood to confer with, no Jerusalem or city of solemnities, no apostles or ordinances, no priesthood after a carnal order, no worldly sanctuary, to countenance, to seal, or to perfect him. He did not want what any or all could give him, for he had *the Son revealed in him*. He was a weaned Isaac; and he would fain have the Galatians to be such likewise; and to hear the word which of old had been heard in the house of Abraham over Isaac, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

All this is given us, mystically, in Isaac, the child of the freewoman, whose birth caused laughter, and whose weaning was celebrated with a feast. And this mystery is, we thus see, largely and expressly revived and opened, in its full character, in the Epistle to the Galatians.

It is not of *glories* only that we must be thinking, when thinking of predestination. God's purposes concerning us are still richer. We are predestinated to a state of *gratified affections*, as well as to a place of *displayed glories*--to "the adoption of children," and to be "before Him in love," as well as to the inheritance of all things. Ephesians i. And the Spirit already given is as surely in us the power to cry, "Abba, Father," as He is the seal of the title of the coming redemption.

We are apt to forget this. We think of calling and of predestination, in connection with glory, rather than in connection with love, and relationship, and home, and a Father's house.

And yet it is relationship that will give even the inheritance or the glory its richest joy. The youngest child in the family has another kind of enjoyment of the palace of the king, than the highest estate and dignitary of his realm. The child is there *without state*, for its title is in relationship--the lords of the land may be there, but they are there as at court, by title of their dignity or office. And the child's enjoyment of the palace is not only, as I said, of *another* kind, it is of a higher kind--it is personal and not official--the palace is *a home* to it, and not

merely *the court of royalty*.

Now it is the son, the child at home, the child in the privileges of relationship, that we get in Isaac. It is such an one that he represents--this is what Isaac, mystically, is. Isaac was kept at home, waited on by the household, nourished and endowed; and the wealth as well as the comfort of his father's house was his; as we read, "And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country."

Mystically looked at, Isaac is thus before us, a son, born of the free woman, born of promise, born of God, as it is said, "I will come and Sarah shall have a son." Isaac represents that adopted family who are made "accepted in the Beloved," who have put on Christ, who stand in His joy, and breathe His spirit.

We have, however, to consider him *morally* as well as *mystically*; that is, in his *character*, as well as in his *person*. The elements, however, are but few. There is but little history connected with him. There are but few incidents in his life, and but little disclosure of character. And this is to our comfort. At times we find among the elect of God very fine natural materials, a noble bearing of soul, or a delicate, attractive form of human virtue; and again, at other times, either poor, or even very bad, human materials. And this becomes a relief to our poor hearts. *Because* we find it (from a better acquaintance with ourselves than with others) easy to own the poor and wretched materials that go to make up what we ourselves are; and then it is our comfort (comfort of a certain sort) to find like samples of nature in others of God's people.

Isaac was *wanting* in character. He was neither of fine nor of bad natural materials. There was much in him that, as we say, was amiable, and which, after a human estimate, would have been attractive. But he was wanting in character. The style of his education may go far to account for this. He had been reared tenderly. He had never been away from the side of his mother, the child of whose old age he was--her only child; and these habits had relaxed him, and kept a naturally amiable temper in its common softness. Quietness and retirement, the temper that rather submits than resents, and this allied to the relaxing indulgence of domestic, if not animal, life, appear in him. He was blameless, we may quite assume, pious and strict in the observance of relative duties, as a child and as a husband, and would have engaged the good-will and good wishes of his neighbours; but he was wanting in that energy which would have made him a witness among them, at least, beyond the separation which attended his circumcision, his altar, and his tent. And such a life is always a poor one. To his tent and his altar he was true, to a common measure; but he pitched the one and raised the other with too feeble a hand.

Isaac was forty years old when he received Rebecca to wife. For twenty

years they were childless; but under this trial they behaved themselves even better than Abraham and Sarah had done. Abraham and Sarah had no child, and Sarah gave her bondmaid to her husband. Isaac and Rebecca had no child; but they entreated the Lord, and waited for His mercy. This was a difference, and for a moment, the last are first, and the first are last; and such moral variety do we find among the people of God to this day. But the two sets of children suggest different divine mysteries, as the way of the parents of each thus afford different moral teaching.

There were the two sons of Abraham--Isaac and Ishmael; but they were by two wives: there are now the two sons of Isaac--Jacob and Esau; but they are by the same wife.

The enmity between the sons of Abraham began when Ishmael, a lad of fourteen years of age, mocked the weaned Isaac. But the struggle between the sons of Isaac was in the womb. Two nations were there, as the Lord had told Rebecca, "Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels." And so it came to pass. The man of God was found in Jacob, the man of the world in Esau; the principle of *faith* was in the one, the principle of *nature* in the other. Two manner of people were indeed separated from her bowels, and had struggled in her womb. "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." And this was Esau. Accordingly, Esau made the earth the scene of his energies, of his enjoyments, and of his expectations. He was "a man of the field," and "a cunning hunter." He prospered in his generation. He loved the field, and he knew how to use the field. He set his heart on the present life, and knew how to turn its capabilities to the account of his enjoyments. His sons quickly became dukes, nay kings, and had their cities; as Ishmael's children had become princes, and had their castles. Their dignity and their greatness proceeded from themselves; and the world witnessed them in their magnificence.

But Jacob was "a plain man," a man of the tent. He took after his fathers. Like Abraham and Isaac, he was a stranger here, sojourning as on the surface of the earth for a season, with his eye upon the promise. His children--while Esau's were dukes, settled in their domains, in the sunshine of their dignities and wealth--had to wander from one nation to another people, to suffer the hardships and wrongs of injurious Egypt, or to traverse, as pilgrims, the trackless, wasted desert.

Esau was the "profane" one. His hope and his heart were linked with life in this world, and with that only; for he would say, "I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Like the Gadarenes, and like Judas, Esau would sell his title to Christ. But Jacob had faith, and was ready to buy what Esau was ready to sell.

Two manner of people were, after this manner, separated from Rebecca's bowels, as all this tells us. They are no sooner brought forth than this is seen;

and their earliest habits, their first activities, are characteristic. It was not merely the bondwoman and the free, or the children of the two covenants, as Ishmael and Isaac had been; in Esau and Jacob we get a *fuller* expression of the same natures; the one, that reprobate thing, had from Adam, profane or worldly, which takes a portion in the earth and not in God; the other, that divine thing, had from Christ, which is believing, hopeful, looking to God's provisions, and waiting for the kingdom.

All this survives to the present day, and flourishes abundantly in different samples in the midst of us, or around us. I might say the Cain, the Nimrod, the Ishmael, and the Esau are still abroad on the earth, and these tales and illustrations have their lessons for our souls. They are wonderful in their simplicity; but they are too deep for the wisdom of the world, and too pure for the love of it.

These things I have gathered for the sake of the moral and the mystery which so abound in them. But my immediate business is with Isaac.

Isaac, as I have already noticed, was brought up in his mother's tent. He was, as I may say, rather the child of his mother than of his father--the common case of all of us in our earliest days. But with Isaac, this was so till his mother died; and then he must have been much beyond thirty years of age.

He knew more of Sarah's tent, than of the busier haunts and occupations of men. Her tent had been his *teacher*, as well as his *nurse*, and this education left impressions on his character which were never effaced. We have a passing or incidental, but still, a very sure, witness of the strength of maternal influence over him, in chap. xxiv. 67. "And Isaac brought her [Rebecca] into his mother's tent, *and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death*."

This strongly intimates the tendencies of his early life. And thus was character formed in him. He was the easy, gentle, unresisting Isaac, pious, as we speak, and, as I have said of him, blameless and amicable.

But with all this, and while this I doubt not is surely so, I ask, Was it merely nature or character that bore him unresistingly along the road to Mount Moriah? See chap. xxii. Was it merely filial piety which then disposed him to be bound as a lamb for the slaughter, without opening his mouth? Can we assume this? Was this the force of character merely? I say not so. This was too much for human gentleness and submission, even such as might have been found in an Isaac, or in a Jephthah's daughter. I must rather say, the hand of the Lord was over him on that occasion, just as, long afterwards, it was over the owner of the ass that was needed to bear the King on to the city, and then over the multitude that accompanied and hailed Him on the road; or, as it was over the man bearing the pitcher of water, who prepared the guest-chamber for the last passover. On these

occasions, the hand of the Lord was strong to force the material to comply, and take the impression of the moment. As also in the earlier days of Samuel, when the kine carried the ark of God right on the way homeward, though nature resisted it, their young being left behind them. For the divine power was upon the kine then. And Isaac, in like manner, was under divine power, under the hand of God, on this occasion; willingly, I fully grant, but made willing as in a day of power; for he was to be the type or foreshadowing of a greater than he. The seal was in a strong hand, and the impression must be taken, clear, deep, and legible. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," is the writing on the seal. "As a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

That was a great moment in the life of Isaac, an occasion of great meaning. So in his acceptance of Rebecca. See chap. xxiv. In his taking a wife, not of all whom he chose, but of his father's providing, we may trace the same strong hand over him. There might easily have been more of human submissiveness and filial piety in this, than in the case of the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, we may surely allow; but still this was a *sealing* time as well as the other. This marriage was a type or mystery, as well as that sacrifice. The wife brought home to the son and heir of the father, by the servant who was in the full confidence and secret of the father, this was a mystery; and the material must comply again, and take the impression from the hand that was using it. The potter was making vessels for the use of the household, and the clay must yield. The prophet's children, ages afterwards, had names given them, as the Lord pleased, and the prophet had to say of them, Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders. Isa. viii. And so, Isaac and Rebecca, in the day and circumstances of their marriage, were a type, "for a sign and a wonder." This was their chief dignity; *they tell the mysteries of God.* They are parables as well as mysteries. They were events set in time or in the progress of the earth's history, as the sun and moon and stars are set in the heavens, *for signs.* Each of them has a writing on it under the hand of God. "I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts;" for on these events He has impressed the image of some of His everlasting counsels.

But though this gentle and submissive nature that was in our Isaac was not equal to such sacrifices and surrenders as these, yet gentle, submissive nature is the quality which gives him his character. At times it acts amiably and attractively; at times it sadly betrays him. But at all times, under all circumstances, amid the few incidents that are recorded of him, it is the easy, gentle, yielding Isaac that we see. And the presence of one and the same virtue on every occasion is, I need not say, but poor in point of character. It is *combination* that bespeaks character and divine workmanship. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is firm as well as gracious and joyous. And this is moral glory; as many coloured rays give us the one unsullied result in the

light we enjoy and admire. But this does not shine in Isaac. In none, surely, in its full beauty, save in Him in whom all glories, in their different generations, meet and shine.

Jeremiah, I might here take liberty to say, appears to me to have been a man of one passion, as Isaac was a man of one virtue. I mean, of course, characteristically as to each of them, Isaac and Jeremiah. A godly passion indeed it was, grief over the moral wastes of Zion, which characterized Jeremiah. But being thus his *one* affection, the passion or sentiment, which, after this manner, possessed his soul, it makes him generally very engaging and attractive to the heart; but at times it allies his spirit with that which defiles him. He is angry with the people who were stirring the sorrows of his heart. And he murmurs against God Himself. I speak, of course, of Jeremiah's character, as we get it exhibited in his ministry. I know, surely, in that ministry, looked at in itself, he was the prophet of God and delivered the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. But as a man I speak of him; as a man, he was a man of one passion; as I have said of Isaac that he was a man of one virtue. But it is those in whom there is *assemblage* of virtues, that tell us more assuredly of divine workmanship, of trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth fruit *in season.* Psalm i. For it is this seasonableness that is the real beauty. Everything is beautiful in its season, and only then. Gentleness loses its beauty, when zeal and indignation are called for. The first Psalm is too high a description for a man of one virtue; it implies character, and decision, and individuality; it shows a soul drawing its virtue from God. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." This is of divine husbandry; but such we do not see in our Isaac. In his measure, and certainly in contrast with Isaac, this combination or assemblage of virtues, of which I have already spoken, appears in Abraham; and this difference in the two may be seen in their acting under similar circumstances. Abraham in chap. xxi. and Isaac in this chapter xxvi.[17]

Isaac had been very badly treated by the Philistines. One well after another of his own digging was violently taken away from him, as the wells which his father had dug had been filled up. He had yielded to this wrong with a gentle, gracious spirit, in a spirit that well became one of God's strangers and pilgrims here, who look for citizenship in another world. He went from place to place, as the Philistines again and again strove with him and urged him. This was according to the mind which marks him, as we said, in every incident of his life. Suffering, he threatens not--doing well and suffering for it, he takes it patiently; and this we

[17]As to the common sin of Abraham and Isaac touching the denial of their wives, calling them their sisters, see "Abraham," p. 122.

know is acceptable with God. 1 Peter ii. 20. And so God here attests this; for He owns His servant in this thing, and comes to him by night as He had comforted Abraham. But when, in season, the Philistines are brought to a better mind, and Abimelech the king, with his friend Ahuzzath, and Phichol his chief captain, seek Isaac and alliance with him, I ask, Does not his character, in its way, betray him?

Of course it was right in Isaac to receive them, and plight them his friendship, and to exchange the good offices and pledges and securities of neighbourliness which they sought. For we ought to forgive, if it be seventy times seven a day. But with that there is to be faithfulness in its season--faithfulness as well as forgiveness. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." But Isaac was not quite up to this sturdier virtue. He complains to Abimelech, but it is in such soft and easy terms, that it seems to carry no authority to the conscience with it. Not so his entering into covenant with him. He strikes hands readily, and, I may say, heartily. He makes a feast for the king of Gerar, and sends him away as his ally, without his being brought to any acknowledgment of the wrong which his people had done to the man whose friendship he was now seeking and getting. Nor is there on the lips of Isaac any gainsaying of Abimelech's assertion, that he had done nothing but good to Isaac all the time he had been in his country. As far as this intercourse went, and as far as we can discover the mind of the king of Gerar, he was not convicted by Isaac, but returned home with his friends at peace with himself as well as with Isaac. Isaac had not made good to Abimelech's conscience the complaint he had made to his ear--there was want of character and force in it--it partook of Isaac's own nature.

This was but poor virtue in Isaac. It is but poor virtue in ourselves, when it appears--and some of us have to treat it as such, and confess it as such, at times. It is agreeable in a certain form of amiable human nature; but it is not service to God. We are humbled by reason of that in our own ways. It is poor, and our Isaac here gives us, in measure at least, a sample of this.

It was, however, otherwise with Abraham. The king of Gerar had sought Abraham in his day, and sought him for a like reason, and with a like desire. Abraham meets him in as noble a spirit of forgiveness as Isaac would have done, with an equal readiness of heart and hand to accept him, and to pledge him. But with all this, he rebukes him and makes him feel the rebukes. "Abraham *reproved* Abimelech," as we read, but as we do not read in the case of Isaac. Abraham will not send him away satisfied with himself, as Isaac did, with an unanswered boast in his mouth of his and his people's virtues. He will assure him, as fully as Isaac could have done, of his full forgiveness and reconciliation; but he will not hide it from him, that his conscience may have a question with him, though his neighbour may accept him and pardon him; that there are matters (as between him and the Lord) which Abraham's feast and Abraham's friendship could never

settle.

This was *real*, real before God, where *reality*, beloved, ever puts us. May we know that secret better, and be upright before Him! This was beautiful--and by this Abraham was *blessing* Abimelech, and not *merely gratifying* him. But this was not so with Isaac; and we may leave him on this occasion, in chap. xxvi., with something of this inquiry in our hearts, Was it mere nature, or the renewed mind in the saint, that acted thus?--a question which still occurs.

Isaac was an elect one, as surely as Abraham; a stranger with God in the earth; one who *used* his altar as well as *carried* it. He was meditating in the field when he got his Rebecca, and he had prayed for the mercy, when Esau and Jacob were given to him. We speak of *character* in him only, when we thus contrast him with another. We speak of the living, practical ways of a saint; and we see in him what was below a witness for God abroad, though amiable and devout at home. This is found in Isaac; and kindred things are still found, again I may say, as many of us know to our humbling. As one once said to me, "There is much that goes with others for being *spiritual*, because it is done for the eye and taste of our fellow-Christians, and not, as in God's presence, with a single heart to Him."

This indeed is true; and this searches our hearts to their profit. Such notices of our common ways may convict, but they need by no means dishearten us. Quite otherwise; they may be welcomed as for blessing. The light that penetrates to scatter our darkness, leaves itself behind to gladden us, and has title to assert the place as *all its own*--so that we ought to be able, in spirit, to sing of *present light* and *past darkness*, to know what we *were*, and what we *are*, and still to sing--

"All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death was all my own--
All that I am I owe to Thee,
My gracious God, alone.

"The evil of my former state
Was mine and only mine--
The good in which I now rejoice
Is Thine and only Thine.

"The darkness of my former state,
The bondage, all was mine--
The light of life in which I walk,

The liberty is Thine."

This is standing, not attainment; this is what faith entitles us to celebrate. Faith takes up this language, and the soul surely hears it and understands it. But *faith* is the spring, in the inworking power of the Holy Ghost. As in Heb. xi., from beginning to end, it is *faith* that is celebrated. Enoch, and Moses, and David, and the prophets, and the martyrs of other days, may be presented there in their fruits and victories, but it is *faith*, and not the people of God, that the Spirit by the apostle is celebrating in that fine chapter.

But I must return to Isaac.

At the close of chapter xxvi. we read: "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebekah."

This has much for us in the way of admonition; but to use it aright, I must look to things connected with it, or like it, in the earlier history of Abraham, and then in the future histories of Jacob and his son Judah.

The command to the nation of Israel at the very beginning was to keep the way of the Lord very particularly as to *marriage*. They were by no means either to give their daughters to the sons of the Canaanites, or take the Canaanites' daughters for their sons. Deut. vii. 3. If they did so, it would be on the pain of being no longer owned of the Lord. Josh. xxiii. According to this, the apostate days of Solomon are marked by disobedience to this very thing (1 Kings xi.); and afterwards, no real recovery to God could be admitted, without a return to the observance of this principle in their marriages. Ezra x.; Neh. x.

Obedience, therefore, in this thing was a peculiar test of the state of the nation. And it is thus that I look at it in this earliest book of Genesis. For though divine law was not then published, divine principles were then understood. It may be regarded as the witness of the state of *family* religion then, as it was of the state of *national* religion afterwards.

Abraham, in this matter, eminently keeps "the way of the Lord;" and so Eliezer, one of his "household;" and so our Isaac, one of his "children." For Abraham sends a special embassy into a distant land, in order to get a wife "in the Lord" for his son--Eliezer goes on that embassy with a ready mind--and Isaac in patience waits for the fruit of it, not seeking any alliance with the nearer people; and, though sad and solitary, keeps himself for the Lord's appointed helpmeet. Like Adam, he waited for a helpmeet from the Lord's own hand, though it cost him patience and sore solitude. This his meditation in the field at eventide shows. He

endured. He might have got a daughter of Canaan; but he endured. He will rather suffer the sickening of his heart from the deferring of his hope, than not marry "in the Lord," or take him a wife of any that he may choose. And all this was very beautiful in this first generation of this elect family. The father, the servant, and the child, each in his way, witnesses how Abraham had ordered his house according to God, teaching his children and his household the way of the Lord. See chap. xviii. 19.

But we notice a course of sad decline and departure from all this.

Isaac, in his turn and generation, becomes the head of the family. But he is grievously careless in this matter, compared with his father; as this scripture, the close of chapter xxvi., shows us. He does not watch over his children's ways, to anticipate mischief, as Abraham had done. Esau his son marries a daughter of the Hittites. Isaac and Rebecca are grieved at this, it is true; for they had *righteous* souls which knew how to be "vexed" with this; but then, it was their *carelessness* which had brought this vexation upon them.

This we cannot say was beautiful. But still there was a happy symptom in it. There was a righteous soul to be vexed, a mind sensitive of defilement. And this was well. Jacob, however, declines still further. He neither anticipates the mischief, like Abraham, nor does he, like Isaac, grieve over it when it occurs. But with an unconcerned heart, as far as the history tells us, he allows his children to form what alliances they please, and to take them wives of all whom they choose.

This is sad. There is no *joy* for the heart here, as in the *obedience* of Abraham; there is no *relief* for the heart here, as in the *sorrow* of Isaac and Rebecca.

But Judah afterwards goes beyond even all this in a very fearful way. He represents the fourth generation of this elect family. But he not only does not anticipate mischief, like Abraham, in the ordering of his family, nor grieve over mischief when brought into it, like Isaac, nor is he simply indifferent about it, whether it be brought in or not, like Jacob, but he actually brings it in himself! For he does nothing less than take a daughter of the Canaanites to be the wife of his son Er!

This exceeded. This was sinning with a high hand. And thus, in all this, in this history of the four generations of Genesis-patriarchs, we notice declension, gradual but solemn declension, till it reach complete apostasy from the way of the Lord.

But if this be serious and sad, as it really is, is it not profitable and seasonable? Can we not readily own, that it is "written for our learning"? How does it warn us of a tendency to decline from God's principles! What took place in the same elect family, generation after generation, may take place in the same elect person, year after year. The principles of God may be deserted by easy gradations. They may first be *relaxed*, then *forgotten*, then *despised*. They may pass from a *firm*

hand into an *easy* one, from thence to an *indifferent* one, and find themselves at last flung away by a *rebellious* one. Many have at first stood for God's principles in the face of difficulties and fascinations, like Abraham--then, merely grieved over the loss of them, like Isaac--then, been careless about their loss or maintenance, like Jacob--and at last, with a high hand, broken them, like Judah.

This is suggested by the scene at the close of chap. xxvi. As we pursue the story of Isaac after this, we shall find that his soft and pliant nature allies him not only with weaknesses, but with defilement, with some of the low indulgences of mere animal nature. I mean in the closing action of his life, his blessing of Esau and Jacob.

This is a solemn scene indeed, full of warning and admonition.

Though Isaac had been grieved, as we have seen, by the marriage of Esau with a daughter of the Hittites, yet we learn immediately afterwards, that it is this very same Esau that draws and holds the strongest affections of his father's heart, to which that father would, if he could, have sacrificed everything. And this was very sad. It reminds me of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat had godly *sensibilities*, but he was wanting in godly *energies*. Through vanity he sadly sinned; first joining in affinity with Ahab, king of Israel, and then with Ahab going to the battle. But still, he had sensibilities that were spiritual and of divine workmanship. For in the midst of the prophets of Baal, he was not at ease. He had a witness within, that this would not do; and he asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord beside, that we might inquire of him?" But still, and in spite of all this, he went to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, and that, too, in alliance with that very Ahab, who had thus so painfully wounded the best affections of his soul, and who, under his own eye, and as they sat on the throne together, in the spirit of deep revolt from the God of Israel, had consulted the prophets of Baal.

This was strange, as well as terrible; but this was that king Jehoshaphat. And just after the same manner, our Isaac on this occasion had his *sensibilities*, but not his corresponding *energies*. With a godly mind he grieved over Esau's marriage with a daughter of Heth; and yet that very Esau, who thus wounded the witness within him, was the one to attract and hold and order the fondest sympathies of his heart, so as to hinder him from freeing himself to act for God.

It was not through vanity, as it was in Jehoshaphat, that Isaac thus sadly and strangely failed--it was rather, from the common pravity of his character, such as we have seen it to be, a general relaxed moral tone of soul. But whether it be through this or that, he is ensnared, I may say, by an earlier Ahab, though his soul had the sense of that Ahab's apostasy. He would help Esau to the blessing all he could, as Jehoshaphat would help the king of Israel all he could to the victory at Ramoth-Gilead.

What sights are these! what lessons and warnings!

But we must inspect this family scene, this family circle in chap. xxvii. a little more closely. There are others beside Isaac to be looked at.

Abraham's servant in chap. xxiv. had brought two different things with him out of the house of his master, when he visited the house of Bethuel. He brought a *report* of all that the Lord had done for Abraham, and *gifts*.

These different things become tests of that household in Mesopotamia. The report dealt with future and distant things, and had God necessarily connected with it--the gifts might have been independent of Him, and were a present gain. Rebecca was moved by the report. She takes the jewels, it is true; but the tidings which the servant brought are chief with her. The report of what awaited her among a distant people whom the Lord had blessed had power to detach her. It was not Isaac merely, or Abraham's wealth merely. Her father had wealth, and she need not go far to promise herself a home and its enjoyments. But *the Lord* had blessed Abraham, and had now prospered the journey of his servant. It was not a question with Rebecca whether she would take Isaac and a share in Abraham's wealth, or remain poor and lonely. The question was this--Would she take the portion the Lord was now bringing her, or that which her kindred and circumstances in the world had provided her?

And so it is with us, beloved. It is not a question between heaven and nothing, but between heaven and the world, between our taking the happiness which the Lord in His promises, or which human present circumstances, have for us. Are we desirous of divine joy and of heavenly riches? Can we say to the Lord Jesus, Thou shalt "choose our inheritance for us?" Is the distant land, of which we have received a report, our object? This was Rebecca; she could answer these questions. We should wrong her if we judged that with her it was Abraham's wealth and Isaac's hand or nothing. It was not so. As we said before, and surely the story warrants it, she had large expectations of every kind, if she remained at home. She need not take a long, untried journey with a stranger and to a strange people. But all became nothing to her, when in faith she received the report. She comes forth at the call of God.

Rebecca was a genuine daughter of Abraham. Abraham had crossed the desert at the call of the God of glory, and Rebecca now crosses the same desert at the report of what the God of glory had done for Abraham. They had the like "spirit of faith." The stronger expression of it we may find in Abraham, but it was the like "spirit of faith." Abraham had gone forth in the faith of an unattested call; Rebecca now goes forth on an accredited report. There was no Eshcol brought out of Canaan to Ur to embolden Abraham to take the journey; but "this is the fruit of it" was said to Rebecca in the servants and camels and gold and jewels--a branch with a cluster rich and abundant indeed. The report is now sealed to Rebecca, as it had not been to Abraham. Abraham tried an untried path; Rebecca did but

walk in the footsteps of the flock. But they were on the same road, and reached the same place.

This is simple and beautiful in Rebecca, and the way of faith to this hour. But, beloved, there is more, and that, too, of another kind. Rebecca's *character* had been already formed--as, I may say, it is with all of us, before we are quickened of God. The moment of His power arrives--we are made alive with divine life then--the separating call is also answered; but it finds us of a certain character, a certain shape and complexion of mind. It finds us, it may be, Cretans (Titus i.), or brothers and sisters of Laban, or something that wears the strong stamp of a peculiar pravity of nature. And then character and mind, derived from nature or from family or from education and the like, we take with us after we have been born of the Spirit, and carry it in us across the desert from Padan-aram to the house of Abraham.

This is serious. It is serious, that with the quickening of the Spirit, nature or the force of early habits and education, or of family character, will cling to us still. "The Cretans are always liars."

Laban, with whom Rebecca had grown up, was a crafty, knowing, worldly man. It is plain that, on the occasion of Eliezer's visit, he had been moved only by the *gifts*. They made a ready way for Abraham's servant; as we read, A man's gift maketh room for him. Proverbs xviii. 16. Laban was evidently the stirring, active, important one in his father Bethuel's house. He had a taste for occasions which called for management. And all this is a very bad symptom. It is a bad symptom when one carries the bag. It is bad to find one prematurely managing and clever, or, at any period, fond of occasions where skill of that kind is to be exercised, having an aptness in conducting either state affairs or family interests. And just such an one was Laban; and Laban was the brother of Rebecca; and Rebecca had passed all her life, till her marriage, with him; and the family character, in this only great action in which she is called to take a part, sadly betrays itself.

If Abraham and Sarah had brought the foul, unclean compact between them, as they left their father's house to walk with God, so did Rebecca bring this family character, this Laban-leaven, with her. We have *nature* in its pravity with us after our conversion; and we have our own *fleshly characteristics* also, as well as the common pravity of nature. And we have to rebuke them sharply, that we may be sound, that is, morally healthful, in the faith. Tit. i. 13. And this lesson is afresh pressed upon us, from the story of this distinguished woman in this chapter.

But there is more of the same kind. Jacob, as well as his mother, Rebecca, got his mind formed by this same earliest influence. He was all his days--I mean, all his practical, active days--a slow-hearted, calculating man; and in this family scene, in chap. xxvii., we find him to be such an one--a ready, intelligent pupil of his mother, Laban's sister, and whose favourite child he had been from his

birth. So that as Laban had been corrupting his sister Rebecca, Rebecca had been corrupting her son Jacob.

And further still, as this same chapter tells us, Isaac, whose mind and character, as we have seen, had been so remarkably formed by his early life in Sarah's tent, had sunk into the indulgence of some of the low desires of nature. He loved his son Esau, because he ate of his venison. This was poor indeed, and something worse than poor. And this love of venison, we may surely suggest, must have encouraged Esau in the chase; just as Rebecca's cleverness, got and brought from her brother's house in Padan, formed the mind and character of her favourite Jacob. And thus one parent was helping to corrupt one of the children, and the other the other.

What mischief, what sad defilement, is disclosed here, in all this family scene! But we may go on to expose it even more; for the heart is not only capable of such defilement, but it is daring enough, at times, to take its naughtiness *into the sanctuary*. "I was almost in all evil in the *midst of the congregation and assembly*." Proverbs v.

The word to Aaron, long after this, was, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy son with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation. Lev. x. Nature is not to be animated in order to wait on the service of God; it is not to be set in action by its provisions, for the discharge of the duties of the sanctuary. Strong drink may exhilarate, and give ebullition to animal spirits, but this is no qualification for a priest of the house of God.

But even into pollution such as this Isaac seems to have been betrayed. "Take, I pray thee," says he to Esau, "thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go to the field, and take me some venison: and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die." He was going to do the last religious act of a patriarchal priest, and he calls as for wine and strong drink, the food of mere animal life, to raise and endow him for the service!

This was sad indeed, thus to deliberate on the venison at such a moment. We may all be conscious how much of nature soils our holy things, how much of the mere animation of the flesh may be mistaken for the easy and strong current of the Spirit. We may be aware of this, in the place of communion. And this is to be our sorrow and our humbling--we are to confess it as evil, or at least as weakness, and to watch against it. But to prepare for it, carefully to mix the wine and strong drink, to take a full draught, after this manner, this exceeds in defilement.

And nothing comes of all this but dishonour and loss. The whole of this family pollution is judged in the holiness of God, because this was a family of God in the earth. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Isaac is laid aside, Rebecca never sees Jacob

again, and the calculating supplanter finds himself in the midst of toils and wrongs and hardships, supplanted and deceived himself again and again; for twenty long years an alien from the house of his father. Nothing comes of all this, whether we look at the crooked policy of the one party, or at the fleshly favouritism of the other; all is disappointment and shame, under the rebuke of the holiness of the Lord.

There is, however, one relief, and it is a very important one, in the midst of this otherwise foul and gloomy scene. "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." This is the Holy Ghost's own reference to this chapter in Hebrews xi.

But ere I speak of the relief or comfort which this has for us when thinking of Isaac, I take occasion to inquire, What was the nature or character of this blessing by the patriarchs upon their children, which we find again and again in the Book of Genesis?

A blessing was in the hand of Melchizedek in chap. xiv.; as again, long after, there was a blessing in the hand of Aaron in Num. vi. These instances we may easily understand--these blessings were conferred or pronounced by reason of *office*. They were delivered through priesthood ordained of God. There was nothing prophetic or oracular in them. The words which these priests used were rather *prepared* than *inspired*; words already prescribed by divine provision, rather than communicated at the moment by divine illumination, at least in the case of Aaron.

With the patriarchal blessing, however, it was as clearly otherwise. There was a prophecy or an oracle in Isaac's words on Esau and Jacob here in chap. xxvii.; and so was there afterwards in Jacob's words on his children in chap. xlix., and in his words on Joseph's children in chap. xlviii.; and so was there before, in Noah's words, in chap. ix., on Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

But why, I inquire, was this great matter thus committed to the patriarchs?

If I mistake not, some of the secrets of patriarchal religion, patriarchal worship and ministry, are involved in the answer to this. Religion had, in these earliest days, the same great truths which it still has for its spirit and principle. The Fall and Recovery of man, or Ruin and Redemption, were then made known, and they were received by faith. The altars of the fathers, and the ordinance of clean and unclean, tell us of faith and of the apprehensions of faith in those days. The tent of the living patriarchs, and the Machpelah of the departed patriarchs, tell us that they understood the stranger's calling, and a coming resurrection; and Abraham's grove at Beersheba (chap. xxi.), and his alliance with the Gentile at the well of the oath, tell us likewise, in clear though symbolic language, that they understood some of the bright and happy secrets of the millennial age, or of "the world to come."

And worship and ministry, in those infant days, were in their simplest forms. I may say, *nature* suggested that the father or head of the house should be the prophet, priest, and king, there. In after times, when the condition of things spread out, and when, with enlargement and age, corruption came in, *the holiness of God* demanded a separated or circumcised people; and, connected with such, a separated or anointed priesthood. Now, in our day, in the day of the kingdom of God, which is, as we know, "not in word, but in power," it is required that ministry should be something more than nature would suggest, or than holiness would demand; there must be *power*, such as the Spirit Himself prepares and imparts. But in the early days of Genesis, those *family* days--those infant, earliest days--the voice of *nature* was listened to, and duly and seasonably so; and accordingly, the head of the family was the minister of God to the family, and both the dignities and the services of prophets, priests, and kings, within the range of the homestead, or in the family temple, centred in the father.

The blessing of the children seems to flow from this. It was an act performed in the combined virtues of a prophet and a priest, which, as we see, the fathers of the families carried in their own persons. They received a communication of the divine mind, and then uttered it, as "oracles of God;" and, being separated or priestly representatives of God to their children, they pronounced His blessing, God's blessing, upon them.

They seem to sustain this character through the Book of Genesis.

In our Isaac it is sad indeed to see how this character was exercised, or rather abused--as such like high endowments have constantly been, the priestly dignity, for instance, in the person of Eli (godly old man as he was), and the kingly authority, in one tremendous instance, even by such an one as the deeply-loved and honoured son of Jesse.

So Isaac would have made his office serve, not only his private partialities, but his very appetites. And this, too, in the face of solemn, divine warning. The word had gone before, upon Isaac's children (Esau the elder and Jacob the younger), "the elder shall serve the younger." But Isaac's fleshly favouritism and appetites had made him careless and forgetful of this, and he would fain have made the elder, Esau, the heir of the promise.

And here we may call to mind, that Caiaphas, in his day, was such an one as Isaac, combining the prophet and the priest in his own person. And Caiaphas would fain have abused his office and his gift to his own wretched purposes and desires. He delivered a true prophecy with a design on the life of the Lord Jesus. John xi. And in earlier days, the prophet Balaam was of the same generation. He sought, all he could, to use his gift in the service of his lusts. God, however, took him out of his own hand, and forced his lips to utter the sentence of righteousness, the judgment of truth. And, though it be sad to put such men together, even in

a single action, yet so it is; for such was Isaac in Gen. xxvii. Though a sanctified and filled vessel, he would have served the wish of his own fond heart, in the use of the treasure which he carried; but God took him out of his own hand, and used him as the oracle of His settled, sovereign purpose. Again I say, it is sad thus to link such men as Isaac and Balaam in a common moral action. But we know that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." As an old writer says, "The water that is foul in the well will not be clean in the bucket." The flesh in an Isaac is as the flesh in a Balaam; and the world in the heart of each of them is the same world.

But they are not one *to the end.* This is the comfort, the gracious comfort, of which I spoke before. Balaam is Balaam still, the man who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and ran greedily after his own error for reward; he goes on as Balaam, giving counsel to Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the people of God; and at last he fell, as Balaam, with the uncircumcised, slain with the sword, like those that go down to the pit. But Isaac repented with godly sorrow unto a repentance not to be repented of. When his eye is opened, and he discovers what he had been about, and how Jacob had got the blessing which he had prepared for Esau--when it thus confronts him to the face, that he had been withstanding God, but that he could not prevail, his soul seems to awaken as from sleep, and to get alive to all this, for we read of him, that he trembled with a great trembling greatly. v. 33. The sight, the moral sense, of the place that he was filling, startles his soul. He trembles in himself. The flesh which he had been nourishing could not stand him in such a moment--and he seeks it not--it has been exposed to him; and in the light and energy of the better life, he acts according to faith, and says, speaking now of Jacob, and no longer of Esau, "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed."

There was nothing of this in Balaam; Balaam was not turned back. When the angel withstood him in the narrow way, and his ass fell under him, there was none of this godly sorrow working repentance. But our Isaac is restored. He seeks another way, and takes up and follows after God's object from that moment. It is not "the *madness* of the prophet" that the Spirit records in Isaac, as He had to do in Balaam, but the *faith* of the prophet. For in this hour of happy restored fellowship with the mind of God, after his trembling, "with a great trembling greatly," the way of Isaac is sealed and signalized by the Spirit. "By faith Isaac blessed Esau and Jacob concerning things to come." And this is the only matter in the life of Isaac which is noticed by the Spirit in that chapter, Heb. xi.

But this had character in it, and the Spirit has distinguished it. The victories of faith which Moses gained were very fine. He answered both the *attractions* and the *terrors* of Egypt; refusing to be called the son of the king's daughter, and forsaking the country, not fearing the king's wrath. These were splendid victories; and are so to this day, when achieved in the saint. But there are conquests

much less distinguished, which nevertheless are conquests, recorded in this chapter which celebrates the deeds of faith. They may be seen in Isaac and in Jacob. Each of these witnesses of faith, in his day, blessed the children or the sons before him *according to God*, though this was *contrary to nature*. Isaac would have preferred Esau, and Jacob would have preferred Manasseh; but Isaac persisted in his blessing of Jacob, and Jacob in his blessing of Ephraim, and in this, *nature* was conquered. It was not, we may allow, the *world*, in either its snares or its dangers, that stood out to try the strength of faith in the saint--but still it was an opposer. It was *nature*; the suggestions or sympathies or partialities of nature--and while we may admire the splendour of the victories of a Moses or an Abraham, let us remember and look to it, that we fight the fight of faith with *nature*, and gain the day in that field, with Isaac and Jacob.

As to Jacob's part in this family scene which we are looking at, we may certainly say, had he but left his matters in the Lord's hand, where they had been from the beginning, from before his birth, and not allowed his mother to take them into hers, he would have fared far better. How often has many and many a Jacob since the days of Gen. xxvii. proved the same! The Lord had promised him the blessing without any condition. "The elder shall serve the younger." But he could not, in the patience of faith, wait the Lord's time and method to make good His own promise. Therefore the promise gets laden with reserves and difficulties and burthens. It shall surely be made good. The promise of the Lord is certain, and "never was forfeited yet." He is able to make it stand. The elder shall serve the younger--but now, by reason of Jacob's own unbelief and policy, the elder shall give the younger some trouble: because the younger thinks well to deal with the promise in his own craft and skill, he shall be made to reach it after delay and sorrow and shame.

Accordingly, Esau himself gets a promise from the Lord, through his father Isaac, on this occasion, a promise which the divine purpose and grace towards Jacob, at the first, had never contemplated. "And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." *vv.* 39, 40.

All this comes to pass. David, who came of Jacob, sets garrisons in Edom, and the Edomites become his servants and bring gifts. Jehoram, who also comes of Jacob, afterwards loses the Edomites as his servants and tributaries; they revolt, and continue so to this day. 2 Sam. viii. 14; 2 Chron. xxi. 8.

Saviours by-and-by shall come to Zion and judge the mount of Esau. Obadiah 21. The tabernacle of David which is now fallen shall be raised up, and Israel shall possess Edom and the residue of the Gentiles. Amos ix. This shall be made

good in its season, for the elder shall serve the younger--the promise is yea and amen. But now, and from the days of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat of the house of David of the lineage of Jacob, Esau or Edom has been in revolt; and the promise is thus delayed and complicated and burthened in ways such as the grace of God and the gift by grace had never designed, and such as Jacob had never passed through, had his faith been more simple.

And there is much like this in Christian experience. See the disciples on the sea of Galilee, in Mark iv. The Lord had said to them, "Let us go unto the other side." This was a pledge to them that they were sure to reach the other side. They need not fear. They may, if they please, lay them down to sleep with their Master. But no--they fear, and consult with flesh and blood. And therefore they reach the other side with tremblings and amazement and shame. Their fears loaded their spirit with these burdens, which, had they left the *fulfilling* of the word to Him who had *given* the word, would have been saved them. And so, the unbelief of Jacob in Gen. xxvii., his putting the promise of God into his mother's hand, has loaded the history of his house with those perplexities and contradictions and changes, which, as we have mentioned, were all strangers to the promise, as the simple gift of grace, at the beginning, had purposed it and made it.

Many like experiences the disciples had, through their unbelief, as they companied with the Lord Jesus all the time He went in and out among them--and many such are known to us His saints at this day. Our spirits gather amazement and shame, when we might have known only the calm and bright enjoyments of faith, looking, if it were so, at a sleeping Jesus, and knowing His sufficiency for all promises, though winds and waves oppose.

Thus was it with Jacob, according to the part he acted in this sad family scene. Esau was not the *guilty* one here. He was rather the *injured* party; and therefore, in the hand of Him by whom "actions are weighed," Esau is the only one who is a gainer. All the rest have to learn what the way of their own hearts shall end in. Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob alike prove this. It is Esau, so far the injured one, who gains, as we have seen, anything by it all. By his sword he lives, and, in time and for a time, breaks the yoke of his younger brother off his neck.[18]

After all this, just at the end of his ways, though not of his days, at the desire of the suspicious and terrified Rebecca, Isaac sends away Jacob. And this action is done with an expression of sorrow and shame and disappointment, the bitter

[18]Jeroboam in his day took his own way to reach the promise of God touching the kingdom of the ten tribes, by the prophet Ahijah--and he delayed his own mercy; just as Jacob does in this chapter. Nay, further. Jeroboam has to be an exile in Egypt till the death of Solomon, because of this; as Jacob has for twenty years to be an exile in Padan, for the same evil. See 1 Kings xi.

fruit which their own way had prepared for them. All would have been different indeed, had the spirit and obedience of faith kept them in the way of the Lord. xxvii. 42; xxviii. 5.

And here we reach, as we said, the end, the practical end, of the life of our patriarch. He lives, it is true, for forty years after this; it may be more--but he is lost to us. He is as if he were not.

At the close of chapter xxxv. we read, "And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."

Abraham had carefully possessed himself of Machpelah, on the occasion of Sarah's death; and there he had buried Sarah, and there Isaac and Ishmael had buried him; and there, at this time, Jacob and Esau bury Isaac; and there afterwards his twelve sons bury Jacob.

The purchase of this parcel of ground, and the care the patriarchs manifested in the matter of their burial there, tell us of their faith in their own happy resurrection and its attendant inheritance of the land. It tells us that *hope* was in their souls as surely as *faith*--that as they rested, without a doubt, in the certainty of their call and adoption, so did they, with like assurance, in the life and inheritance prepared for them in the world to come. They lived in faith, and they died in faith. They were a people in whose souls the life of faith and hope was known and enjoyed. They betray nature again and again; they err, they shift and contrive and play false with God at times through unbelief; they incur discipline and rebuke, and at times are humbled before men; but they seem never to doubt the blessed facts, that they were *adopted* and *endowed* by the God of glory. Faith and hope lived in their souls. I say not that they had what we have. There is now an unction, an earnest, and a witness, fruit of the given, indwelling Spirit, imparting not only the power but the character of this day of ours. But the patriarchs, in their infant age, seem *never to doubt.* And this is precious--that God, even in the earliest communications of Himself--communications of Himself to His elect even in their childhood, or, in the infant days of Genesis--would be known by them as One to be trusted both for the present and the future.

And again I say, this is precious. The Spirit forms *hope* in the soul of the elect, as surely as faith. Machpelah tells us this, as to the patriarchs. But it was found before them, and it has been found ever since. Adam was a hoping as well as a believing man. As soon as he had faith, he had hope. He walked as a *stranger* on earth, as well as in *the consciousness of life.* And with him, and like him, the antediluvian saints.

Israel afterwards celebrated the last night of their sojourn in Egypt with the

staff in their hand and the shoe on their foot, as simply and as surely as they had put the blood on the lintel. They hoped for something beyond Egypt, as certainly as they counted on security in Egypt.

Moses witnessed this standing of Israel, this proper standing in the camp of God in the power of faith and hope, when afterwards he said to Hobab, "We are journeying to a place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." And so Paul, in his words before King Agrippa, "Unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come."

The oil in the vessels of the wise virgins is the expression of the power of hope. They provided against His delay for whose return alone they looked and waited, be that return far off or nigh.

And to give hope its highest, brightest moral glory, we are given to know, that the present heaven of Jesus is a heaven of hope. Though seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He is, we know, "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." And the mind of the glorified Church will, by-and-by, be kindred with this mind of her glorified Lord; for the heaven of Rev. v. is also a heaven of hope. "Thou art worthy," say the living creatures and enthroned elders of that heaven, "to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign over the earth."

In this life of faith and hope, the fathers of the Book of Genesis are seen to be one. Happy to know this. They illustrate different mysteries, and read us different moral lessons; but in this life of faith and hope they are *one*; and each in his day, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is alike gathered to his people (chaps. xxv., xxxv., xlix.)--each is "a handful of sacred dust" in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, laid up there in sure and certain hope of a resurrection unto life and to the inheritance.

There is a common saying, "It is better to wear out than to rust out." But this better thing was not Isaac's. He rusts out. And *such* was the natural close of *such* a life.

Was Isaac, I ask, a vessel marred on the wheel? Was he a vessel laid aside as not fit for the Master's use? or at least not fit for it any longer? His history seems to tell us this. Abraham had not been such an one. All the distinguishing features of "the stranger here," all the proper fruits of that energy that quickened him at the outset, were borne in him and by him to the very end. We have looked at this already in the walk of Abraham. (See pp. 134-137.) Abraham's leaf did not wither. He brought forth fruit in old age. So was it with Moses, with David, and with Paul. They die with their harness on, at the plough or in the battle. Mistakes

and more than mistakes they made by the way, or in their cause, or at their work; but they are never laid aside. Moses is counselling the camp near the banks of the Jordan; David is ordering the conditions of the kingdom, and putting it (in its beauty and strength) into the hand of Solomon; Paul has his armour on, his loins girded. When, as I may say, the time of their departure was at hand, the Master, as we read in Luke xii., found them "so doing," as servants should be found. But thus was it not with Isaac. Isaac is laid aside. For forty long years we know nothing of him; he had been, as it were, decaying away and wasting. The vessel was rusting till it rusted out.

There surely is meaning in all this, meaning for our admonition.

And yet--such is the fruitfulness and instruction of the testimonies of God--there are others, in Scripture, of other generations, who have still more solemn lessons and warnings for us. It is humbling to be *laid aside* as no longer fit for use; but it is sad to be left merely to *recover ourselves*, and it is terrible to remain to *defile ourselves*. And illustrations of all this moral variety we get in the testimonies of God. *Jacob*, in his closing days in Egypt, is not as a vessel laid aside, but he is there recovering himself. I know there are some truly precious things connected with him during those seventeen years that he spent in that land, and we could not spare the lesson which the Spirit reads to us out of the life of Jacob in Egypt. But still, the moral of it is this--a saint, who had been under holy discipline, recovering himself, and yielding fruit meet for recovery. And when we think of it a little, that is but a poor thing. But *Solomon* is a still worse case. He lives to defile himself; sad and terrible to tell it. This was neither Isaac nor Jacob--it was not a saint simply laid aside, nor a saint left to recover himself. Isaac was, in the great moral sense, blameless to the end, and Jacob's last days were his best days; but of Solomon we read, "It came to pass, *when Solomon was old*, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods," and this has made the writing over his name, the tablet to his memory, equivocal, and hard to be deciphered to this day.

Such lessons do Isaac and Jacob and Solomon, in these ways, read for us, beloved--such are the minute and various instructions left for our souls in the fruitful and living pages of the oracles of God. They give us to see, in the house of God, vessels fit for use and kept in use even to the end--vessels laid aside, to rust out rather than to wear out--vessels whose best service it is to get themselves clean again--and vessels whose dishonour it is, at the end of their service, to contract some fresh defilement.

Wondrous and various the lessons and the ways of grace, abounding grace! Quickly indeed does the soul entertain thoughts of God according to the suggestions of *nature*, instead of knowing Him according to *faith*. Nature holds Him before the soul as a judge, or as a lawgiver, or an exactor of righteousness, as One that carries balances in His hand to try every thought and work--One that is

sensitive and resentful of the slightest touch of evil. But faith holds Him before a gazing, worshipping eye and heart, as the One who always loves us, do what He may, or speak as He will. For faith worketh by love (Gal. v. 6)--it worketh towards God as Love, and therefore it is a spirit of confidence and liberty. If we find our souls under pressure of the spirit of fear or bondage or uncertainty, we may be sure that they have let go the gentle hand of faith, and allowed themselves to be led by such tutors and governors as nature provides. This ought not so to be. We are to know that we have *ever* to do with *love*! When we read, when we pray, when we converse, when we confess, when we serve, when we sing, when we look at His hand in providence, or think of His name in secret, may faith's communion with God be ours! He loves us. The relationship in which we stand, and of which our Isaac was the expression, makes this a *necessary* truth.

It is "to Himself" that God has brought us and adopted us--having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ *to Himself*, according to the good pleasure of His will. Eph. i. 5. And these words "to Himself" bespeak God's own joy in the *adoption* of the elect, in making them *children*; as was Abraham's joy at the weaning of our Isaac. Christ presents the Church to *Himself* (Eph. v. 27), and the Father gathers the elect as children by adoption to *Himself*. Each has personal interest and personal delight in the mysteries of grace. And according to this, the Holy Ghost, in the Epistle to the Galatians, to which the story of Isaac so refers, pleads the cause of the Father as well as the cause of Christ with us. He teaches us that we are redeemed by Christ from the *curse* of the law, and, through the Spirit given to us by the Father, from the *bondage* of the law. All this is full of blessing to us; and all this, the mystery of Isaac, the son of the free-woman, suggests to us.

Faith is that principle in us which gives to the Lord Jesus the place or privilege (such a place indeed as God alone can fill) of sustaining the confidence of a sinner entirely by Himself, of being the immediate, the only object of the sinner's trust. But faith, in this dispensation, involves *relationship*. By faith we stand in the Person as well as *on* the work of Christ--and Christ being the Son, we are children, as we are saved sinners. We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Gal. iii. 26. And Ishmael is not to share the house with Isaac. The spirit of bondage gendered by the law or by the religion of ordinances, is to be put out, and the spirit of liberty alone is to fill it. For the house is now set in a child and not in a servant, in Isaac and not in Eliezer--and *relationship* is God's joy as it is ours. "The *Father seeketh* such to worship Him." Wondrous words of abounding grace, beloved! and Sarah's joy in our Isaac pledged this in patriarchal days.

JACOB.

GENESIS XXVIII.-XXXVI.

I have already followed the course of the Book of Genesis to the close of chapter xxvii. From that chapter to chapter xxxvi., Jacob is principal; and it is that portion which I now purpose to consider.

There is a very important era in the life of Jacob afterwards--his sojourn in Egypt for seventeen years, and his death there. But this is found in that part of the book in which Joseph becomes principal, so that I shall refer to it only so far as Jacob is concerned.

The life of Jacob is one of very large and varied action, quite of another character from that of his father Isaac. The wisdom of God readily accounts for this; because there is divine intention in the construction of these histories, as there is divine truthfulness in the record of them. By them we are instructed in mysteries, as surely as we are made acquainted with circumstances. It has been my desire to notice these mysteries, as well as to gather the moral of these earliest ages of the human family, and these first fathers of the elect of God.

Election, and the call of God, in the sovereign exercise of His grace, were exhibited in Abraham.

Sonship, to which election brings us, (for we are predestinated unto the adoption of children,) was then shown in Isaac.

Discipline, as of a son, (for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?) is now, in its season, to be exhibited in Jacob.

And thus, after this manner, these successive histories not only continue the orderly narrative of facts, but present us with a view of that course or conduct which the grace and wisdom of God is taking with His people.

Jacob was a son as well as Isaac. But he was a son at school, or under correction; not a son, like Isaac, in the care and nurture of the home of his father; not as one given to know the rights and dignities of son and heir, but as one made to know the love, the practical love, that chastens and corrects. This was the child Jacob. But we are never to forget that we are never more distinctly children than when under such discipline. Discipline assumes adoption. The exhortation or correction speaks to us as *to children*. The discipline may occupy the foreground, but the fatherly love is the secret.

But this notice of Jacob as a son under discipline I give here only as a general characteristic. As to the materials of his history, various and striking as they are, we may distinguish them into four eras:

1. His birth and early life in his father's house in the land of Canaan.

2. His journey to Padan-aram, and his residence there, in the house of Laban the Syrian, for twenty years.

3. His journey back from Padan-aram, and his second residence in Canaan.

4. His journey from Canaan to Egypt, and his residence and death there.

This may be read as a simple, natural table of contents, so to call it, and I would follow it out in its order.

PART I.--This earliest portion of Jacob's history, his birth, and his life in the house of his father in the land of Canaan till he was about seventy years of age,[19] I have generally anticipated in the preceding paper, entitled "Isaac." And I may be allowed to say, necessarily so; because it is involved in those chapters of the Book of Genesis, where Isaac is principal. I must therefore refer to it.

PART II.--Jacob begins to be seen under discipline in chap. xxviii., and there it is where this second part of his history opens, and where also, in the Book of Genesis, he becomes the chief or leading character.

In his journey out towards Padan, but ere he left the borders of Canaan, at the place called Luz, the Lord meets him. This was not his father's bed-side, where he was sinning, but a lonely, dreary, distant spot where his sin had cast him, and where the discipline of his heavenly Father was dealing with him. In such a place God can meet us. He cannot appear to us in the scene of our iniquities, but He can in the place of His correction. And such was Luz to Jacob. It was a comfortless spot. The stones of the place were his pillow, and the sky over his head his covering; and he had no friend but his staff to accompany and cheer him. But the God of his fathers comes there to him. He does not alter his present circumstances or reverse the chastening. He lets him still pursue his way unfriended, to find, at the end of it, twenty years' hard service at the hand of a stranger, with many a wrong and injury. But he gives him heavenly pledges, that hosts on high should watch and wait around him.

The Lord had made, as we know, great promises to Abraham: the same were repeated to Isaac, and are now, at Bethel, given to Jacob. But, to Jacob, something very distinct from these common promises is added: "And, behold, I

[19]It is said in the Jewish writings that he was seventy-seven.

am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." *v.* 15. This was a new promise, an added mercy; just because Jacob needed it, as Abraham and Isaac had not. Jacob was the only one of the three who needed that the Lord would be with him wherever he went, and bring him home again. Jacob, by his own naughtiness, had made this additional mercy necessary to himself, and, in abounding grace, he gets it; and the vision of the ladder pledges it. The promises to Abraham and to Isaac had not included this providential, angelic care. They had remained in the land; but Jacob had made himself an exile, that needed the care and watching of a special oversight from heaven, and he gets it. And it is to this, I believe, that Jacob alludes, when he says to Joseph, The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors. Chap. xlix. 26. This angelic care, that watched over him, under direct commission from heaven, in his days of exile and drudgery, which his own error had incurred, *distinguished* him as an object of mercy, and gave him "blessings" above those of his "progenitors." And in this character he reached "the bounds of the everlasting hills." He was heir of the kingdom as a *debtor to special mercy*, through that abounding grace that had helped him and kept him amid the bitter fruits of his own naughtiness. As David, in his day, triumphed in "the everlasting covenant" made with him, though for the present his house was in ruins through his own sin. 2 Samuel xxiii.

This is God's way, excellent and perfect in the combination of grace and holiness. And upon this, let me observe, that in all circumstances there are two objects, and that nature eyes the one, and faith the other. Thus, in divine discipline, such as Jacob was now experiencing, there is the *rod*, and also the *hand that is using it*. Nature regards the first, faith recognizes the second. Job, in his day, broke down under the rod, because he concerned himself with it alone. Had he eyed the counsel, the heart, or the hand that was appointing it (as we are exhorted to do, Micah vi. 9), he would have stood. But nature prevailed in him, and he kept his eye upon the rod, and it was too much for him.

So in *failures*, as well as in circumstances, there are two objects. Conscience has its object, and faith again has its object. But conscience is not to be allowed to rob faith of its treasures, the treasures of restoring, pardoning grace, which the love of God in Christ has stored up for it.

There is great comfort in this. Nature is not to be over-busy with circumstances, nor conscience with failures. Nature is to feel that no affliction is for the present joyous, and conscience or heart may be broken; but in either case, faith is to be at its post and do its duty; and much of the gracious energy of the Spirit in the epistles is engaged in putting faith at its post, and encouraging it to do its duty. The Apostles, under the Holy Ghost, take knowledge of the danger

and temptation we are under by nature; and while it is abundantly enforced, that conscience is to be quick and jealous, yet it is required that faith shall maintain itself in the very face of it.

To know God *in grace* is His praise and our joy. We naturally, or according to the instincts of a tainted nature, think of Him as one that *exacts obedience and looks for service*. But faith knows Him as one that *communicates*, that speaks to us of privileges, of the liberty and the blessing of our relationship to Him.

But Jacob's soul was not quite up to this way of grace. He found the place where the ladder and the angels were seen, and where the God of his fathers spoke to him, to be "dreadful." In some sense it was too much for him. As it was long afterwards with Peter on the holy hill. God is true to the aboundings of His grace. Jacob may say, "How dreadful is this place!" Peter and his companions may have their fear; but the ladder, nevertheless, reaches to heaven, and angels are up and down upon it in the sight of the patriarch; and the glory on the Mount still shines. For the grace of God is richer than the apprehensions of the soul about it. God shines in Himself above our experiences. And it is in Himself He is to be known, and not in the reflections of our experience.

Still, like Peter on the hill, Jacob, in some sense, found it good to be at Luz, and he called the place Bethel. It was the house of God to him, for God had there been with him, and spoken to him; it was the gate of heaven in his eye, for there the angels had appeared, as descending from their own place on high. "This is none other but the house of God," says he, "and this is the gate of heaven."

God both *records* His name and *glorifies* it. He records it or reveals it at first, and faith accepts Him. In due time He verifies that record or testimony, making it all good, and thus glorifies His name. And wherever He records His name there is His house. Ornan's threshing-floor got the same dignity long afterwards, which Luz now gets, and on the same title. "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel," says David of that spot of the Jebusite. 1 Chron. xxii. 1. For it was the place, like this Bethel of our patriarch, where mercy had rejoiced against judgment, where God was revealing Himself in the aboundings of His grace, and there faith descries the house of God. Jacob and David, each in his day, were saints under discipline; but the Lord met them in the rich provisions of His love, thus revealing Himself or recording His name; and this was His house to them. But it is easier thus to consecrate the house, than to learn the lesson that is taught there. Jacob rightly uttered his heart under force of the impressions which the vision could not but awaken; but there is something of old Jacob in his spirit still. The faulty way of his heart is at work still, and he seems to calculate, and to make bargains, and to enter into conditions, though the Lord had spoken to him there in the language of the promise, in free, sovereign, abounding goodness. For nature still stirs itself after many a rebuke and defeat,

and outlives what for a moment may have appeared a death-blow. Jacob no more now leaves it behind him at Bethel, than before he had left it behind him in his mother's tent.

But he goes on. Grace sets the chastened saint on his journey, and with some alacrity too, till "he came to the land of the people of the east," till he reached Padan-aram, where his mother's counsel had appointed him, and, doubtless, where the hand of God had now conducted him.

His introduction to Rachel was at the well, and in the midst of the flock, like that of Eliezer to Rebecca; and Eliezer was but Isaac's representative. But Jacob was the poor man, Isaac the wealthy. Isaac could enrich Rebecca with earrings and bracelets of gold, pledges of the goodly estate he had for her. Jacob has but his toil and sweat of face. The one was as the son and heir, the other a man who had beggared himself, and must find his own way through the wear and tear of life as best he may, with God's help. Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep. Hosea xii. 12. And a hard service he was about to find it. But he enters on it at once, and continues at it for twenty long years. Chap. xxix.-xxxi.

The scene is laid in the house of Laban his mother's brother, and a scene of various moral action it quickly becomes, and so continues. We have not only Jacob himself and Laban, but the two wives Leah and Rachel, and their two handmaids Zilpah and Bilhah.

Jacob had been but a little while under the trials and sorrows of his sojourn with Laban, ere he was visited after the very pattern of his own offence at home. He had deceived his father touching his brother and the blessing. Laban now deceives him touching Rachel and the marriage. But in much of his behaviour during the twenty years he spent with Laban, we see what was excellent in him. For the force and influence of knowing *that we are under the hand of God for correction*, is necessarily felt by a mind that has anything right towards God in it. It is not that nature will be changed or broken under such a pressure, but it must, in measure, more or less, be controlled. David when under rebuke, sore and humbling as ever saint had exposed himself to, carries himself beautifully. His words to Ittai, to Zadok, and to Hushai, his resentment of the motion of the sons of Zeruiah, his humiliations, his lamentations over Absalom, and his using his victory as if it had been a defeat, all this and more than this of the same kind, show us a blessed work of the Spirit in his soul. In Jacob at Padan-aram we get nothing so fine as this, I know; but, if I mistake not, we get a saint under discipline conscious of the discipline, well understanding the character of the moment under God's hand, and the righteousness of the rebuke of the Lord, carrying himself meekly and watchfully. He submits to the wrongs of an injurious master in silence. He serves patiently, and suffers without complaint. His wages were changed ten times, but he answers not again. In all this he is humbled under the mighty hand of God, as one

who would fain remember his own past ways. And at the end of twenty years' hard drudgery and ill usage, he is able to testify of his fidelity, and God Himself seems to seal the testimony. By the providences of His hand, and the revelations in visitations of His Spirit, and also by direct interferences with Laban himself, the Lord shelters and blesses and vindicates Jacob.

There is beauty in this. I say not that nature was mortified, that the root of bitterness was judged. We shall find, I know, that after this, Jacob is old Jacob still, sadly betrayed by the same leaven that had been working in him from the beginning. But, while in the house of the Syrian, Jacob was as one who knew himself to be under the mighty hand of God as for correction, and carried himself accordingly, neither justifying himself against reproaches, nor contending for his rights in the face of wrongs and injustice.

Such a one I judge Jacob to have been in the house of Laban. As to Laban, he was a thorough man of the world when Jacob entered his house, and so he was when Jacob left it. In all his dealings, from first to last, he eyes his own advantage. He is constrained to own that the hand of God was with Jacob; but he would make that hand, through Jacob, minister to himself, and turn Jacob's interest in God to his own account. For twenty years he had the witness of the hand of the Lord, and the operation of His grace and power, under his eye and in his house, and that daily; but he continued a man of the world still. God came near to him, as afterwards to Bethsaida and Chorazin in the doing of His mighty works; but there was no repentance. And Jacob's departure from his house at the last, was like an escape out of the enemy's hand, or from the snare of the fowler. It was a kind of exodus. In a family way it was what was afterwards known by Israel in a national way. Laban was as Pharaoh, and Padan-aram as Egypt to our patriarch. He would fain have kept Jacob a drudge still, or at best have sent him away as a beggar; but the Lord pleaded for Jacob with Laban, as He afterwards pleaded for Israel with Pharaoh. Laban and Pharaoh had each in his day *witnessed* the operation of God, but neither of them became the *subject* of it.

A thorough lover of the world he surely was, and never anything better; a crafty one, and a hypocritical one too--common companions. At the end, when all his devices are broken to pieces, and no enchantment is allowed to prosper, as against Israel, he does what he can, according to the miserable, disgusting style of a crafty heart, to cover the purpose which had now failed, and to give himself a fair character. He pretends that Jacob's leaving him was mere fondness for home, while his conscience must have told him many a very different reason. He affects grief and indignation at not having an opportunity of kissing his daughters and grandchildren, and of sending them away honourably, while his conscience must have reminded him how he had sold them again and again. He seems to be concerned for them, now about to be in Jacob's hand, as if his own hand had

been that of a father to them. He pretends to spare Jacob through religious fear of God's words, while he must have felt himself to be completely restrained by God, willing or unwilling, religious or profane; as Balaam afterwards. And he gives a serious air to the last bargain between him and Jacob, introducing the name of the God of Abraham, though he had just been searching for his idols, and was preparing to return to that land out of which God had called Abraham, and to continue there a thorough, heartless man of the world still, a worshipper of his own god.

Miserable man! pointing a holy, serious lesson for us.

But we have the women and the children of Padan-aram, as well as Laban the Syrian. The women and the children of the Book of Genesis are all mysteries. We see this in Eve and her three children--in Abraham's Sarah, and Abraham's Hagar, and Abraham's Keturah, and the seed of each of them. And we noticed in Isaac (see page 152) the same mystic character in Rebecca his wife, and Esau and Jacob his children. Each and all tell out parts and parcels of the purpose of God, as in figures. And now, in the women which become connected with Jacob in Padan, whether it be his wife the elder sister, or his wife the younger sister, or the handmaids given to them, and in the children of each of them, there are mysteries again.

In the children of Israel, that is, the nation, the seed of Abraham, we find three classes. 1. There has already been Israel *after the flesh*, set in the land under title of their fleshly alliance with Abraham. 2. There is now, at this time, the nation *in bondage*, made to know the service of the Gentiles. 3. There will be, by-and-by, the nation *set in grace*, Israel redeemed and accepted, established in the promises made to the fathers.

These are three generations in the nation of Israel, as that nation either has been, now is, or is to be hereafter. And the shadowing of this, I judge, we see in the families of Jacob in Padan; that is, in the children of Leah, who had her title in the flesh; in the children of the handmaids; and in the children of Rachel the beloved, who had no strength in nature, but whose seed was all of promise or of God.

The way of the wisdom of God is thus learnt in the women and children here, in chapters xxix.-xxxi., as it had been in the earlier family scenes of this wondrous book.

As soon as Joseph, the child of promise, the son of Rachel the beloved, is given to him, Jacob speaks of leaving Padan, the place of his exile and bondage. See xxx. 25, 26. And this, simple as it seems to be, has character in it. The condition of an alien and servant did not suit him, as soon as he got the seed that witnessed

to him the power of God in his behalf. He may have felt somewhat instinctively, that it became him now to assert his freedom, and to bethink himself of his home and his inheritance. I say not whether Jacob really entered into this, or whether it was something of an inspiration that he breathed, and which, in its full meaning, was beyond him. But so it was that he said to Laban, immediately upon the birth of Joseph, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country."

It had been very much after this manner with Abraham in an earlier day. As soon as Isaac was weaned, the scene around Abraham immediately changed. The child of the bondwoman has to leave the house, and Abraham takes precedence of the Gentile. See chap. xxi. The weaning of Isaac was the turning-point in Abraham's condition. In spirit, for a moment, he enters the kingdom, raising a new altar, an altar to the "everlasting God," and planting a grove. This was very fine, and the character of it I have considered in its place. See "Abraham," page 126. But so was it now with Jacob, as then with Abraham. As soon as Joseph, the child of promise, that witnessed the grace and strength of God, is given to him, he conceives the thought of freedom and of home.

This was a fine, striking instance of the intelligence of a new mind in Jacob. The way of faith, I may add, is seen in Rachel on the same occasion, for she calls her son "Joseph," that is, "adding;" assured that the Lord, who had now *begun* His mercies towards her, would *go on* with them and *perfect* them. As faith now in our hearts and on our lips, in like spirit, says, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" From His gifts, Rachel not only "drew a plea to *ask* Him still for more," but in still bolder, happier faith, drew a conclusion to *trust* Him still for more.

But though this was so, the connection between Laban and Jacob is continued for a while after Joseph's birth, till the separation takes place under force of other circumstances altogether, leaving Laban, still more than before, a kind of pillar of salt, or a solemn remembrance to us of what our wretched hearts are capable.

Part III.--The time of his servitude closes in chap. xxxi. He is then on his way back from Padan-aram to Canaan; the principal scenes of his journey being at *Mount Gilead*, shortly after his setting out, and *Mahanaim*, near the brook Jabbok, a little before he entered the land.

It was at Mount Gilead that the parting between him and Laban took place, for Laban had pursued him so far. But there they make a covenant, offering sacrifice, and then eating together as upon the sacrifice.

Such a scene, in mystery, exhibits our blessing. For we enjoy a covenant of peace, secured by a sacrifice, and witnessed by a feast. So, in the night of redemp-

tion from Egypt, the altar and the table, that is, the sacrifice and the feast, are there again. The blood is upon the door-post, and the household, thus ransomed and sheltered, are within, feeding on the lamb, whose blood was protecting and delivering them.

But there is another thing on this occasion to be noticed--*it is Jacob who offers the sacrifice.*

This has a great character in it. It tells us that Jacob knew his place and dignity under God. Laban had all the claims which nature or the flesh or relationship could confer, but Jacob acts in spite of them. Laban was the elder; he was the master and the father-in-law. But still Jacob takes the place of the "better," and offers the sacrifice, in the like spirit of faith as Abraham when entering into covenant with the king of Gerar (chapter xxi.); or like Jethro at Horeb, in the midst of the Israel of God, and in the presence of Aaron. Ex. xviii.

Such cases are among the triumphs of faith; and they are no mean triumphs either. To know our high title in Christ, and by no means to surrender it, even when circumstances may humble us, this is no easy thing. Jacob was under discipline in Padan-aram. He had no altar there. Before God he was rather a penitent than a worshipper. But before Laban he knows himself as a saint, and here, at the Mount Gilead, he has his pillar, his sacrifice, and his feast, and he exercises that faith which emboldens him to act according to his dignity as a saint and priest of God, in the presence of all the claims of flesh and blood. Elihu, in the book of Job, though renouncing *himself* before his elders, asserts the title of *the Spirit in him*, in the face of the highest claims of nature.

It is very encouraging to witness such fragments of the mind of Christ in the saints. Jacob never suspected his title in Christ, from first to last, though under discipline all his days. And this is blessed--blessed to take the place that grace, in its riches, in its exceeding riches, in its glory and in its aboundings, gives us. I do not believe, if Peter in John xxi. had purposed to reach the Lord as a *penitent*, he would have *hurried* towards him as he did. A penitent would have approached with a more measured step. But Peter was not thinking of his late denial of his Lord, but of his Lord Himself. His step was therefore hurried and earnest. He had sinned against his Master, it is indeed true, and might have been backward and ashamed. But, wondrous to say it, as Peter *the penitent* would not have taken so ready and so earnest a journey, so Peter the penitent would not, at the end of it, have been so welcome to his Master, as the confiding though erring Peter. In this is the grace and heart of Him "with whom is *all* our business now."

These are but fragments however, broken pillars in the temples of God. Nature is nature still; and Jacob, quickly after all this, betrays himself as *old* Jacob still.

One has said, that had the Lord slacked His hand with Job, when the *first*

trial was over, Job would have come short of the blessing. There was respite; and it might have been thought that all had ended. But God's end in grace was not yet reached; and we may be sure that Satan's malice was not yet satisfied. The unweary adversary begins afresh, the Lord gives him place again, and Job is visited a *second* time.

And nature is just as unwearied as Satan. Expel it and it will return. We have just had this little respite from the way of nature, in Jacob at Mount Gilead, and seen for a moment the better mind in him, and some expressions of the glory, but we are quickly, too quickly indeed, to see the old man again.

Jacob goes on his way from Mount Gilead, and as he approaches the borders of the land, the angels of God meet him. Jacob at once recognizes them. "This is God's host," says he, and he called the place Mahanaim.

This was holy ground. The undertakings of chapter xxviii. had been fulfilled--the pledges of Bethel had been redeemed. Accordingly, we have no ladder here. Providential, angelic guardianship had fulfilled its ministry; Jacob had been kept in the distant land, and brought home to his own land. The ladder may, therefore, be taken down, and instead of angels ascending and descending as between heaven and the patriarch, angels *meet* him. They are standing before him, just to salute him, or to welcome him on his return. The Lord God of his fathers and of the promises was welcoming our patriarch home, and ministers of the heavenly courts were sent to express the mind of their King towards him.

This was "piping" to Jacob, and Jacob ought to have "danced." He should have breathed an exulting spirit. He should have been already in triumph, ere the battle was fought, or even the armies were arrayed. He should have entered the field with songs, like Jehoshaphat. If the hosts of heaven thus waited on him, what had he to fear from the hosts of Esau? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But this was not so with him. He "laments," rather than dances, at this piping. He trembles, and prays, and calculates. He marshals his force, as though the battle were his. This is all *religious*, but it is all *unbelief* too; and all this the Lord resents. Surely He does. It was all out of harmony in His ear. He had welcomed Jacob home with every token of an earnest, honourable welcome, but Jacob was out of spirits.

The Lord seeks to be *one* with us, and that we be one with Him; so that discordance of soul can never suit Him. He withstands Jacob. "There wrestled a man with him," as we read, "till the breaking of the day." This was God's answer to his prayer. And this is all very significant, and it has lessons for us.

It is found by us much easier to trust the Lord in all questions that arise between Him and ourselves, than it is to bring Him in, and use Him, and trust Him, in questions that arise between us and others--easier to trust Him for eternity than for to-morrow; because eternity is entirely in His hand. To-morrow, as we judge,

is more or less divided between Him and others--in the power of circumstances as well as of God. Abraham, in his day, betrayed this. He came forth at the bidding of the God of glory, leaving country, kindred, and father's house; but as soon as a famine came, his faith failed, and instead of trusting the Lord in the face of circumstances, he goes down to Egypt.

Jacob, at Mahanaim, betrays the same easy, common way of nature. He is unable to trust God in the face of Esau. Esau's 400 men frighten him, and he will interpose, first, his messengers with words of peace and friendliness, and then, his presents, that by one or the other he may allay the heat of his brother's anger. He has no faith in God, so as to bring Him in between himself and Esau. He trembles, and prays, and calculates, and marshals his household. Circumstances have proved too much for him. But immediately afterwards, when the Lord Himself withstands him, when it becomes a question between him and God, then he is bold and prevails. He faints not, though rebuked, and rebuked sharply, by the Lord. He behaves himself like a champion of faith, and obtains a good report. He carries himself like a prince, and gains new honours. This is a common experience, and this moment in Jacob's history at the brook Jabbok expresses it.

There is not, however, necessarily, in such a victory as this, a cure for that faint-heartedness that had occasioned the previous conflict. And Jacob is now about to illustrate this for our further admonition. In the very next chapter (xxxiii.), which is but the continuance of the same action, or a further stage in it, we find him the same timid, unbelieving, calculating man, in the presence of Esau, as he had been, ere he had prevailed with the wrestler at Jabbok.

This is admonition for us. There may be exercise of spirit before God, and yet not much advance in the strength of the soul in carrying on its conflict with the world. In no stage of his history does Jacob appear morally lower than in that which immediately follows Peniel. He is not in anywise purified from himself. He calculates, he prevaricates, he affects amiability and confidence, he lies, he flatters. He stood against the stranger at Jabbok. He was strong in faith, glorifying the grace of God, even when the way of God had a controversy with him. But before Esau he practises and acts the old man to shameful perfection. He rids himself of his brother by a grossly false pretence. He is nothing better than a mean flatterer, a servile courtier, shamelessly speaking of the face of Esau as of the face of God. It is all miserable--a humbling picture of the moral condition to which a saint may come, for a time, if nature be allowed.

There are moments of exhilaration of spirit, and we may be thankful for them; as when Jacob had so lately, in the preceding chapter, said, "This is God's host;" and again, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." These are moments of exhilaration of spirit. But then, they may be only *refreshments*, and not solid edification. And sad indeed it is to see a saint after them returning

so quickly to himself. "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?"

And who will trust his own heart, when we thus see that Jacob's was so untrue? Jacob had lost the knowledge of God's name. He had to inquire after it, instead of using it and enjoying it. That name was "Almighty," the name that told him of all-sufficiency for all his need. But Jacob had lost it in chap. xxxii., and he is not as one who had recovered it in chap. xxxiii. He is contriving for himself. And we may, in like manner, lose the name that has been revealed to us. That name is "Father"--a name that may give abiding calmness and strength and liberty to the soul. It prepares a home for the heart. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." This home is enough to make our joy full, as John speaks. And though we may be under His hand for discipline, as Jacob was, still we are to know the power of that name, the full, secret, unchanging love of a father. Like Jacob in these two chapters, we have lost the name of God, if it be not thus with our souls. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children," says the apostle to us. And Jacob, therefore, may be no longer such a wonder to us, but we may the rather at times be a wonder to ourselves.

After this, in his journey onward from the place where he and Esau parted, he reaches Succoth, and then Shechem, and we may say, he had then returned to Canaan. But it is only still worse and worse with him. He seems for a while to have entirely forgotten himself and the call of God. And mischief must follow this. Consistency with our calling is looked for. We are all, it may be in a thousand ways, untrue to it; but if it be willingly disregarded by an easy, relaxing conscience, the commonest moral defences may soon give way. Truth and integrity may be forced to yield, and such pollutions may at last be found, that would not, as the apostle speaks, be named among the Gentiles.

At Succoth, where our patriarch first arrived, he builds a house; and then at Shalem, in Shechem, he buys a field--what Abraham and Isaac, truer to the call of God, never did, and never would have done. How could he count on moral security under such circumstances? The tent had been exchanged for a house, and the pilgrim stranger had become a citizen and a freeholder. Was not all this a forgetting of himself under the call of God? The Lord, long after this, lets David know, by His servant Nathan, that there was a difference between a *house* and a *tent*, and that He would have that difference maintained. 1 Chron. xvii. But here at Succoth, Jacob violates this. So also it is the divine memorial of the patriarchs in their purity, that they dwelt in tents (Heb. xi. 9); but here at Succoth, Jacob willingly forfeits that memorial. And again, the Lord did not give Abraham so much land as to set his foot on (Acts vii. 5); but here at Shalem in Shechem, Jacob, in spite of this, will have a parcel of ground, and buy it for an inheritance.

The altar, which comes next, in the catalogue, to the house and the field, may appear at first to be a relief and a sanctifier, the one good thing in the midst of corruption. But it is, perhaps, the worst of all. It was not raised to Him who had appeared to him. There had been no communion between the Lord and Jacob, at either Succoth or Shechem. Shechem was not Bethel, and this parcel of ground, where El-elohe-Israel was raised, was not the place of stones and destitution, where abounding grace had shone from an open heaven on the unfriended head of the patriarch, but the parcel of a field which Jacob had bought of the children of Hamor, the father of Shechem. It was raised, not by a heavenly stranger to the God who visited him, but in the midst of the uncircumcised. It looks like an attempt to get the Lord's sanction of Jacob's loss of his separated, pilgrim, Nazarite character; to link His name and His worship with that on which His judgment was resting, and toward which His long-suffering was shown till iniquity was full.

Surely it is rather an uncircumcised Jacob we see here, and not circumcised Shechemites. It is all miserable. Is this a son of Abraham? Is this a saint of God? Is this one of God's strangers in a world that has revolted from Him? This is like the religious energy of Christendom, which has put the name of Christ in company with the world that is under His judgment, and only borne with in His long-suffering. It is as if Israel had consented to Pharaoh, and undertaken to give Jehovah an altar in Egypt. But such altars are no altars--as another gospel is not another. Such religion is vain, whether practised in these earliest days at Shechem, or now in these days of Christendom, among the nations of a judged, condemned world, from which separation is the call of God. But this will not do. A fair trade with the world will be followed, and the course of it pursued greedily, without watchfulness or conviction, but religious family services, and religious national ordinances, the modern order at Shechem, will all the while be waited on.

It was of the fruit of all this that Jacob had afterwards to say, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." For it is to the action in chapter xxxiv. that Jacob thus refers, when he was about to die, in chapter xlix. He finds out, at the end, the real character of all this, the fruit of his dwelling at Shechem. In self-will a man had been killed there, and a fence thrown down. But surely Jacob himself had digged down God's fence before. The partition-wall which the call of God had raised between the clean and the unclean, between the circumcision and the Gentile, he himself, in spirit, had broken down, when he settled as a citizen or freeholder on his purchased estate at Shechem. And Simeon and Levi may perfect this, as soon afterwards as they please.

"And Dinah, the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land." xxxiv. 1. Was this the way of the house of Abraham? Was this the family of the separated patriarch keeping the way of

the Lord? Had Abraham been thus slack? What intercourse had he had for his children with either the sons or the daughters of the land?

It is all sad, and proclaims its own shame. Shechem is next door to Sodom. But it is not Sodom, I grant. Jacob is not Lot. We can distinguish; and we have to distinguish, though it is sad to be put to the work of distinguishing. Nature prevails, in some more, in some less, in all the recorded saints of God. But there is *moral variety*, as well as the *prevalency of nature*, and "things that differ" among the saints are to be distinguished by us. There is a *soiled* garment, and there is a *mixed* garment. Our way, under the Spirit, is to keep the garment both unsoiled and unmixed. Surely it is to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world." But still, a *soiled* garment is not a *mixed* garment, a garment, as Scripture speaks, "of divers sorts, of woollen and of linen." Nor is a garment with a thread of "another sort" now and again in it, to be mistaken for a mixed garment, the texture of which is wrought on the very principle of woollen and linen. Scripture, ever fruitful and perfect, exhibits characters formed by what are called "mixed principles," and also characters which occasionally betray the mixture, but which are not formed throughout by them. The life of Lot was formed throughout by mixed principles. As soon as temptation addressed him, he entered into connection with evil. Though associated with the call of God, he had to be saved so as by fire. The garment which Lot wore was of divers sorts, of woollen and of linen. Abraham, at times, wore a soiled garment, but never a mixed one. Lot was untrue to the call of God from the outset of his career to the close of it. He became a citizen where he should have been a stranger, taking a house in the city of Sodom, while Abraham was traversing the face of the country from tent to tent. And Lot's life of false principles leads him into *sorrows that are his shame*--and that is the real misery of sorrow. He had no comfort in his sorrow. His righteous soul was vexed: this is told of him; but there was no joy, no brightness, no triumph in his spirit. The angels maintained much reserve towards him. He had to escape with his life as a prey, and under the loss of all beside.

Our Jacob was not of this generation. We dare not say he was a man of mixed principles, or one who wore a garment of divers sorts, of woollen and linen. But he had a soiled garment on him pretty commonly, and here at Succoth and at Shechem, a garment with threads of another sort woven in it. His schemes and calculations disfigure him, and are the soiled garment; his building a house at Succoth, and purchasing a field at Shechem, untrue to the call of God, and to the tent-life of his fathers, look very like a garment with threads of another sort in it.

Still Jacob is not to be put with Lot. His life was not *formed* of mixed principles. He was indeed a stranger with God in the earth. But, like Lot, he had been in the place of the uncircumcised willingly; and he was now to feel the bitterness of his own way; and very much what Sodom had been to Lot, Shechem is now to

Jacob. He is saved (may I not say?) yet so as by fire. The iniquity of Simeon and Levi, with the instruments of cruelty that were in their habitations, bring poor Jacob very low. He is at his wits' end in the midst of that people, of whom he had purchased his estate, and in the neighbourhood of whom, he had, Lot-like, consented to settle.

Things, however, are now at the worst. We are about to make, through the grace of God, a happy escape with Jacob out of all this, to find a good riddance of Shechem and all its pollutions.

"A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" We often prove this ourselves. A word will do more for us at times than long and careful discourses. For "power belongeth unto God." "Follow me," from the lips of Christ, had power to detach Levi from the receipt of custom; while, in the same chapter, a discourse was heard by Peter without effect, being left by it, as he had been before it, the easy, kind-hearted, amiable, and obliging Peter. See Luke v. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," even that very people, of whom it had been said before, "All day long have I stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

An instance of this power is found in the history of Jacob, just at this time, in chapter xxxv. 1.

"Arise, go up to Bethel," said the Lord to him, "and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."

These few words were with power. They formed, I believe, the great era in the life of Jacob, or rather, in the history of his soul. They were few and simple, unaccompanied by anything strange or startling, no vision or miracle attending them; but they were a day of power. He had already come forth from the vision of the ladder at Bethel, from the magnificent sight of the angelic host at Mahanaim, and from the wrestling of the divine Stranger at Peniel, scarcely helped or advanced at all in the real energy of his soul. But now, power visits him; and power with God may use as weak an instrument as it pleases; it matters not. The hand of God can do the business of God, though it have but a sling and a stone, or the jaw-bone of an ass, or lamps and pitchers; and the Spirit of God can do the business of God with souls, though He use but a word, or a look, or a groan.

These few words which open chapter xxxv. prevail over Jacob. "Arise, go up to Bethel." Bethel is rewritten on his heart and conscience as by the finger of God. He falls before it, as Abraham, in chap. xvii., had fallen before the name of "God Almighty," or as Peter, long after, in Luke xii., fell before the look of Jesus.

Power is always its own witness, as light is. These words, carrying the power of God with them, are everything now to the soul of our patriarch. They manifest their virtue at once, just as the one touch of the woman in the crowd did.

As soon as Jacob heard them, without fuller commandment to do so, he cleanses his household, and will have his tents purified of all the abominations which they had brought with them out of Padan. In spirit he was already at Bethel, the place where God had met him in the riches of His grace, in the day of his degradation and misery. Bethel had been reintroduced to his heart--yea, manifested to his soul in greater vividness than ever. He now read the story of grace clearer than ever; and *grace pleads for holiness.* The feast of unleavened bread waits on the Passover. The grace of God that bringeth salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. For grace, again I say it, pleads for holiness. And so, Jacob, now hearing of Bethel in the power of the Spirit, without further ordinance, or requirement, or command, will have his house and his household clean.

This is full of beauty and meaning. Pollution cannot be allowed by one who is in the sense and joy of abounding grace. Gods and earrings, idols and vanities, are together buried under an oak at Shechem, and Shechem is left behind. The patriarch rises up with all that was his, and is quickly on the road to Bethel. He had kept the feast of unleavened bread in company with the Passover, as Israel afterwards did in Egypt; but, like Israel too, he is at once, with staff in hand and shoe on foot, leaving his Egypt behind him. And the Lord accompanies him, as He did Israel in the day of their Exodus afterwards; and accompanies in *strength* too; for, as the rod of Moses opened the way of Israel in the face of enemies, and He that was in the cloud looked out and troubled the host of Pharaoh, so now, we read of Jacob and his household, "they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."

This is surely full of beauty and meaning, I may again say. There is mercy and blessing here, but there is humbling also. Israel had lost the power of God's name, and Jacob must now learn that he had lost also the honour of his own name. But all shall be given back to him. "God Almighty," and "Israel," and "Bethel" are revealed afresh, at this moment of revival.

God must be worshipped as the God of salvation. To be sure He must, in such a world as this. Such worship is the only worship "in truth." John iv. 23. In Lev. xvii. and in Deut. xii. the divine jealousy touching this is strongly expressed. It is as "Saviour," He records His name in a scene of sin and death. As He says by His prophet, "There is no God else beside; a *just God and a Saviour*; there is none beside me." Isa. xlv. 21. This is revelation of Him; and on this all worship is grounded. In this He records His name, and there is His house of praise. At Bethel, God has thus recorded His name, and there was His house, and there Jacob now brings his sacrifices. He raises his altar, and calls it El-Bethel. With Jacob, that was the Tabernacle of the wilderness, or the Temple on Mount Moriah, the Temple on Ornan's threshing-floor. And this was infinitely acceptable, and God gave fervent

and immediate witness of such acceptableness; for He appeared to him at once at the altar there, and blessed him, and said, "Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where He talked with him."

This was the expression of divine acceptance, and delight in Jacob's altar at Bethel. This was like the glory filling the Tabernacle in Exodus xl., and again filling the Temple in 2 Chron. v. This was the God of grace and salvation with desire occupying the house and accepting the worship which a poor sinner, who had tasted abounding grace, had raised and rendered to Him. Nothing can exceed the interest of such a moment. Solomon felt the power of such a moment; for on seeing the glory fill the house which he had built, he utters his heart in these admirable words: "The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. But I have built a house of habitation for Thee, and a place for Thy dwelling for ever." The Temple, where mercy was seen to rejoice against judgment, had power to draw the Lord God from the thick darkness, the retreat of righteousness, into the midst of His worshipping people.

What could exceed this? And, in patriarchal days, this was seen at this altar or temple at Bethel. The glory was there. The Lord appeared there, and spoke there to Jacob, as afterwards to Solomon. Luz was as Ornan's threshing-floor, and each of them had become God's house. And Jacob called the place, a second time, Bethel, but without any of the misgivings that had soiled his spirit when he was there at the first. He is now there in the spirit of Solomon before the glory in the Temple, knowing God's return to him, and His nearness and presence with him.

Then, in the freedom and strength of all this, our patriarch resumes his journey. He goes from Bethel to Bethlehem, and from thence, by the tower of Edar, to Mamre, in the south country, where his father Isaac was dwelling. But in none of these places do we read of house or land again. It is the tent and the altar and the pillar, the journeying onward still, the burial of his aged father, and at last, as one with his fathers, dwelling in the land where they had dwelt before him. See chap. xxxvii. 1.

This was indeed a different journey, in its moral character, from the one which he had before taken from Padan to Mount Gilead, and from thence onward to Shechem through Mahanaim and Succoth. Jacob is unrebuked now. We have no wrestling as at Peniel, no peremptory voice summoning away as from Shechem. No fears are awakened in our hearts respecting him, lest the tent may be deserted again, or the call of God be forgotten. The word "Bethel," on the lips of the Lord

and on the ear of Jacob, had done wonders. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" surely we may again remember. "Behold, God exalteth by His power: who teacheth like Him?" And He might surely have challenged His erring but convicted child, after this second scene at Bethel, and said to him in the words of Isaiah, "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."

It is not that all is perfected as yet. Reuben's iniquity may tell us this too painfully. But the rising up from the place of nature, and the moral extrication of his heart from the spirit of the world, have taken place. Nor is it that he is as yet beyond the place of discipline. That is not so. He does not find Rebecca with Isaac at Mamre. He never sees his mother again, the mother who had so preserved him and cherished him. His mother's nurse he buries; and more than that, his beloved Rachel he loses. He has indeed the pledge of strength in "the son of his right hand," but that same son told of sorrow touching Rachel. And thus he is under discipline still. But--he is in God's *way*, as well as under God's *hand*. That is the new thing. Discipline is telling upon him, and reaching its end. The path is shining, and its latest hour will soon be found to be its brightest.

Part IV.--When we enter upon chapter xxxvii. we find *Joseph* to be principal in the action, and principal in the thoughts of the Spirit of God. This is evident from the second verse: "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph being seventeen years old," &c. But we get detached notices of Jacob from this chapter to the end of the book, and which give us the last portion of his history.

He was now, as I may call him, a widower. He appears before us as a lonely, retired man, with more of recollections than of present activities about him. He was indeed the patriarch, the common head and father of all the households of his children, and so recognized by them. But the *business* of the family was rather in their hands; and he was passing his widowerhood without seeking to be again the stirring, energetic man he had once been.

His retirement, however, was not like that of his father Isaac. Isaac, for the last forty years of his life, is not seen. He appears to have been laid aside, as a vessel unfit for use, as I have observed of him, not *wearing* out, as the word is, but *rusting* out. See "Isaac," p. 185. But this was not Jacob's closing years. He was no longer a man of business, but his retirement was not *inactive*. The richest, happiest, and purest exercises of his soul seem to be now, and they enlarge and deepen as they advance; chastened and disciplined as we have seen, his soul is now rendering the fruit of divine husbandry. We cannot fully say that Jacob ever reached the high dignity of being a *servant* of God; but we may say, when we have

reached the end of his story, that he was *fruitful* to Him.

For there is a difference between *service* and *fruitfulness*. Service is more manifested and active, fruitfulness may be hidden. The hand or the foot may serve, and so they should. Tipped with the blood and with the oil, they are to be instruments in the hands of the Master of the house; but it is in the deep, secret places of the heart that the husbandry of the saint, in the power of the Spirit through the truth, is to be yielding fruit to God. Fruitfulness is known in the cultivation of those graces and virtues which give real and intrinsic character to the people of God--those habits and tempers and properties of the inner man which, with God, are of great price. It is within, or "out of the heart," that those herbs, meet for Him by whom the soul is dressed, grow fragrant and beautiful, such as bespeak the virtue of that rain from heaven which has fallen upon it.

It is this fruitfulness, as I judge, which will be found in our Jacob, in this last scene of his pilgrimage. We have had some fainter notice of this, while yet he remained in Canaan, and ere he took his journey to Egypt. But the richer harvest of this husbandry is gathered during the seventeen years that he spent in that land, ere he himself was gathered to his fathers. For this participation of God's holiness, this fruit of the discipline of the Father of spirits, is commonly gradual--and we shall find it to be so in Jacob--the light shining more and more unto the perfect day; the last hour being the brightest.

In the course of chapter xxxvii., which I have now reached, we are told that the brethren of Joseph were gone to feed their flocks at Shechem. But why was this recurrence to Shechem? Was it that the purchased land, the family estate, was there?[20] It was a dangerous place to be connected with. It had proved a snare to the whole family, and the Lord had called them from it. Had Jacob been as watchful as he should have been, we might not now have heard again of Shechem and of the flocks and the brethren there. But still, it is happy to see that there were symptoms of uneasiness in his mind about it; for he sends Joseph to find out how the flocks and the brethren were faring there, as though there were some misgiving in his heart about them in so suspected a place. And this may be received as the pulse of a quickened state of soul in our patriarch, though that pulse be but weak.

So afterwards in chapter xliii., when he is sending away his sons, the second time, into Egypt to buy food, he commits them into the hand of the Lord as "God Almighty." "God Almighty," says he, "give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin." This also tells happily of Jacob's condition of soul--that in some measure at least *he had recovered the power of that*

[20]This parcel of ground, at last, becomes only a burying-place, like Machpelah; but it had not, at first, been purchased as such, as Machpelah was.

name which he had once lost, and which, as we saw, all the exercise through which he had passed at Peniel had not given back to him.

From these testimonies we may say that Jacob was under godly exercise, by the hand of the Father of his spirit, in those early days. Beyond this I need not notice him, till we see him preparing to go down to see his son in Egypt before he die. But that moment was a very important moment indeed in the progress of his soul--and we must meditate on it.

On his hearing that Joseph was yet alive, and governor over all the land of Egypt, we read that his heart fainted, for he believed it not. It was the Lord's doing--for so the fact was--but it was marvellous in Jacob's eyes. He "believed not for joy, and wondered;" for this was receiving Joseph alive from the dead. At first this was too much for him; but when he saw the waggons which king Pharaoh had sent to bear him, and all that belonged to him, down to Egypt, his spirit revived, and he said, without further delay, "It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

Nature thus spake at once in Jacob, as soon as the report was believed; and without further challenge he begins his journey to Egypt. But a calmer moment, as we shall now see, succeeds this outburst or ebullition of nature, and then the way of nature is challenged.

"And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifice to the God of his father Isaac."

This is remarkable. Why these sacrifices at Beersheba? There had been none at Mamre, ere Jacob set out. Why, then, this halt at Beersheba, and this service to the God of Isaac?

This may at first be wondered at; but it will be found to be common enough (I had almost said, necessary) in the ways of the people of God.

Nature had acted in Jacob at Mamre, as soon as he believed the report about Joseph, and set him at once on the road to Egypt. But now the *spiritual sensibilities* have waked up, and are challenging the conclusions and ways of nature. Very common this is. The *saint* is now feeling reserve, where the *father* had felt none. Jacob had not dealt with the Lord about this journey, as he was beginning it; but the mind of Christ in him, his conscience in the Holy Ghost, so to speak, is now taking the lead, and the judgment of nature is reviewed, and reviewed in the light of the Lord.

Many years before this the Lord had said to Isaac, Go not down into Egypt (xxvi. 2); and this had been said to Isaac in a day of famine, like the present. And this is remembered by Jacob as soon as he reaches Beersheba, the last spot in the southern quarters of the land, which lay in the way to Egypt, and in the view of

which was stretched out that country to which Isaac had thus been warned not to go.

All this accounts to me for Jacob's sacrifices at Beersheba to the God of his father Isaac. And all this has great moral meaning in it. It was a mighty stir in Jacob's soul, and it was very acceptable to the Lord. As we find in the day of the siege of Samaria. The poor lepers outside the city immediately feed themselves and gather for themselves among the tents of the Syrians. It was natural, almost necessary, that they should do so. But soon afterwards another mind begins to stir in them, as here in our patriarch, and they say, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. 2 Kings vii. This was the action of a better mind, like this present stir in Jacob's spirit. And this awakening in Jacob is so acceptable with the Lord, that He comes at once to him with these words of consolation, "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

When we consider this for a moment, we may well say, What a communication this was! How thoroughly did it let Jacob know that the Lord had read *all* his heart, his present fears and his earlier affections, the mind of the father and the mind of the saint, the desires of nature and the sensibilities of the spirit. "Fear not to go down into Egypt" calmed the present uneasiness of his renewed mind; "Joseph shall surely put his hand upon thy eyes," gratified the earlier desire of his heart over his long-lost child. How full all this was! How perfectly did it prove the reality of the sympathy of Christ with *all* that was stirring in His elect one! Jacob found pity in Him, and grace for seasonable help. "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, thou knewest my path," was said by David, and is here surely understood by Jacob. The groan that was not uttered by him in man's ear, had, in *all* its meaning, entered the ear of Him who searcheth the heart. And after this, Jacob can no longer halt at Beersheba, or question his further journey to Egypt.

He accomplishes it; and his first sight of Joseph, as we might have expected, and as the Lord would have fully warranted it to be, was the occasion of fullest joy to his long-bereaved heart. And I would here observe, that I have felt, as to Jacob in these his last years, that he had become a very *affectionate* old man; and this is a happy impression, another witness of an improved state of heart. For a calculating man, such as he had been in the habits and activities of his life, is commonly, and somewhat of moral necessity, wanting in thoughtfulness and desire respecting others. He is too much, of course, his own object. But now it is not thus with Jacob. His grief at the loss of Joseph was intense. He bewails Simeon bitterly as

well, and seems ready to brave the horrors of famine, rather than hazard the loss of any more of the children. And then, at the close of these years, his adoption of the sons of Joseph, his sympathy with Joseph in his sorrow over the preference of the younger, his reference to Rachel and her burial at Ephrath, and his mention of Leah, and of his fathers and their wives in connection with Machpelah, all is from a loving heart. And the general grief which his death occasioned would tell us that he had been, in the midst of the people, a loved, affectionate old man. It is delightful to mark all this.

But with all this we find him, in his own person and ways, very much the same widowed, solitary man in Egypt as we saw him to have been for years in Canaan ere he came out. Only it was thus under very strong temptation to be otherwise; for he maintained his strangership, though he now had opportunity to make the earth again the scene of his efforts and expectations. For we like *reflected* dignity. We know the charms of it full well. If nature were given its way, we would be making the most of our parentage, and connections, and set off before others our alliance with that which is honourable in our generation. Jacob, in Egypt, had some of the very best opportunities for indulging his heart in that way. His son was then the pride of that land. Joseph was the second man in the kingdom, and Joseph was Jacob's son. Here was a temptation to Jacob to come forth and show himself to the world. Joseph's father would have been an object. Would not all eyes be upon him? Would not place be given to him and way made for him, whenever or wherever he appeared? Nature would have said, If Jacob had such opportunities, let him show himself to the world. The spirit of the world must have suggested that; as long afterwards to a greater than Jacob, who had no *reflected* glories to exhibit, but all *personal* glories. "If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world." See John vii. 4. But, in the spirit of one who, in his way, had overcome the world, Jacob continues a retired man through all his life of seventeen years in Egypt. He was a stranger, where every human attraction joined in tempting him to be a citizen.

To me, I own, this is exquisite fruit of a chastened mind, fruit of divine discipline, the witness of a large participation of the holiness of God, the holiness that suited the calling of God, the calling that made Jacob a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. At Shechem he reminded us of Lot in Sodom, but here he reminds us of Abraham in his victory over all the offers of the king of Sodom.

But with this separation from the world there is nothing of false humility. In the midst of all this practical strangership he knows and exercises his dignity under God. As he enters, and as he leaves the presence of king Pharaoh (chap. xlvii.), he blesses him. This is to be observed. As he stood there in the royal presence, he owned himself a pilgrim on the earth, somewhat poor and weary too; but at his introduction and on his exit he blesses him, as one who knew

what he was in the election and grace of God; for "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." This is not what old Simeon did when he had the infant of Bethlehem in his arms, but this is what old Jacob now does, when he has the greatest man on the earth before him. He made no requests of the king, though he might reasonably have expected whatever he asked. He was silent as to all that Pharaoh or Egypt would do for him, but he speaks as the better one blessing the less again and again. This was like the chained prisoner of Rome before the dignitaries and officers of Rome. Paul let Agrippa know--he let the Roman governor know--that he, their prisoner, carried and owned the good thing, and that he could wish no better wish for them all, than that they were as he was. And this is faith that glorifies grace--the proper business of faith--precious faith indeed, whether in a prisoner-apostle, or in an exile stranger-patriarch. Rome and Egypt have the wealth and power of the world, such as men will envy and praise, but Paul and Jacob carry a secret with them that makes them speak another language.

This is all full of meaning in our Jacob. The glory is hidden in an earthen vessel, but it is there, and the vessel knows it to be there. Jacob does nothing in those Egypt-years of his, to make history for the world. He takes no part in its changes; its interests and progress are lost upon him; he is at the disposal of others, taking what they may give him, and being what they may make him; but he knows a secret that takes his spirit above them. Others may flourish in Egypt, he only spends the remnant of his days there. See xlvii. 27, 28.

I own indeed that I stand in admiration of this way of the Lord, of the Spirit of God, with Jacob. To such a life as his had been, most suited was such an end as this now is. It is a poor thing that we should need such a pause as this, at the end of the journey; but, if needed, it is beautiful to see it fruitful, after this manner. During that long husbandry of his soul under "the Father of spirits," that seventeen years in Egypt, how commonly, I dare to suppose, did Jacob sit before the Lord, meditating the past years, with some confusion of face; and the fire would kindle then, and the refiner's work go on.

But when these silent and retired years are about to close, we find him, somewhat abruptly, stirring and earnest. It is with Joseph respecting his burial. He will have Joseph not only promise, but swear, that he will bury him in the land of his fathers. xlvii. 30. This is also very beautiful. We never find him urgent about the conditions of his *life* in Egypt; he seems willing, as I said, to take what they give him and to be what they make him; but as to his *burial*, he is, now, all urgency and decision. He will have it confirmed to him by an oath, that his son will take his dead body to that land which witnessed the promise of God to him. He is earnest and peremptory now, as he was indifferent before. For faith likes to read its title clear, full, and indefeasible. Abraham would have the inheritance

by *covenant*, as well as by *word*. Chap. xv. Jacob now will have the burial, such a burial as is worthy of the hopes of a child of Abraham, by *oath*, as well as by *promise*.

All this shows us another Jacob than what we once knew him to be. He is now partaker of God's holiness; his mind and character are in consistency with the call of God. He is a stranger with God in the earth, but in sure and certain hope of promised inheritance. This is fruitfulness; I say not that it is service; but it is beautiful fruitfulness in the inner man.

In chapter xlviii. which follows, we get that one act in his life which is signalized by the Spirit as the act of faith. See Heb. xi. 21. But the whole chapter is beautiful. All is *grace* on God's part, and all is *faith* in the heart of Jacob. For it is the proper business and duty of *faith* to accept the decisions of grace, and that is just what grace is doing here. Grace adopts the sons of Joseph, who had no title in the flesh, and takes them into the family of Abraham. Grace gives the place and portion of the firstborn, the double portion, as though they were Reuben and Simeon. Grace sets the younger of them above the elder. And grace gives Joseph, or the adopted firstborn, an earnest of his coming inheritance. To all this Jacob bows and is obedient. In faith he accepts the decisions of grace. Nature may resent this; but Jacob is true to the word of grace committed to him. Joseph was moved when Jacob was setting Ephraim above Manasseh. Jacob feels for him; but he fulfils the word of God committed to him, let nature be surprised or wounded as it may. He does not listen to nature in his son Joseph, as he had listened to it on a like occasion, years and years ago, in his mother Rebecca.[21]

Surely this is beautiful: faith thus accepting the decisions of grace. But in this, Jacob was also God's oracle. He was not only in faith obedient to the purpose or counsel of grace, but he was used of God as a vessel of His house, used to declare His mind, to represent and act His purposes in these mysteries of grace, the *adoption*, and the *inheritance*, and the *earnest*.

And as this vessel was thus so fully approving itself fit for the Master's use, it is still used. We still see him and hear him as God's oracle, as we enter chapter xlix. He calls his twelve sons, and blesses them. He delivers, under the Spirit, the words and judgments of God touching them. But this was a very trying moment to him. It exceeds all in what it cost him. In preferring Ephraim to Manasseh, he suffered something. But he, who did not then attend to nature in his son, will not now attend to it in himself. He goes through this sorrowful, humbling scene, feeling it bitterly at certain stages of it; but he still goes on with it and through it. He had now to retrace, under the Spirit, and as the oracle of God, and in their

[21] In Joseph obtaining the rights of the firstborn, there is something besides grace; but I do not notice it here.

presence, the ways of his sons in past days, and the fruit of these ways in days still to come. He had to do much of this with a wounded heart, and with recollections that might well be deeply humbling. For these words upon his sons were a kind of judgment upon himself for his past carelessness about his children. But still he does go on and finishes his service, as the oracle of God, and that too with such sympathies and affections as give us some further beautiful witnesses of his purified state of soul.

Levi's and Simeon's iniquity has to come before him. But he resents this now in a way, no trace of which we find in him in the day when that iniquity was perpetrated. It troubled him then because of the mischief which it might work for him among his neighbours. "Ye have troubled me," said he, "to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." Chap. xxxiv. 30. This was the mind he was in when he was a citizen in Shechem. But now it is on other ground altogether, higher and purer ground, that his soul refuses this iniquity. It was iniquity; that is enough; and he will not let his honour be united with it. Then he opens his eyes on the uncleanness of Reuben, just to be shocked by it. And then, as the backsliding of Dan is summoned up before him, his whole soul is moved, and he is cast on the hope of God's salvation, his only escape, the only escape which he would own, from all that was around him, behind him, or before him. "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

What affections and energies are here! How finely this vessel did its service in the house of God! Poor David knew more than sorrow for the loss of Absalom in the day of Absalom's fall. That slaying of his son brought sin to remembrance. And here Jacob entered, with full personal sympathies, into the counsels of God, and had his own part and share in recollections that must have stirred the conscience.

He not only announced these judgments of God, but felt them. He was not a *mere* vessel, but a *living* vessel. And he was faithful to Him that appointed him, though the service was, after this manner, full of humbling and bitterness.

We saw Jacob "dumb for a season." This we noticed as the character of many years of our Patriarch's closing life. But his mouth had now been opened by faith; and once opened, God uses him abundantly as His oracle. This is like Zacharias, the Zacharias of Luke i. He also, as we know, had been dumb for a season; but in faith he wrote his child's name upon a writing-table, and then the Lord used him as His prophet.

Here the story ends; but I believe we have gathered the moral of it. The Lord's

hand with Jacob tells us how unwearied He is with His foolish and wayward ones. It is *variety*, too, as well as *patience*, that we see in this constant moral culture. Jacob had to learn different lessons; and He, with whom he had to do, set Himself in patient grace to teach them all to him. Bethel, Peniel, Bethel again, and Beersheba, witness this, as we have seen. And then, throughout a changeful course, at home and abroad, in youth and in manhood, among strangers or at the side of his father and his mother, Jacob betrayed much that needed chastening, and the lesson was taught him again and again.

He reminds us of the disciples in the days of the Lord. In how many ways had the Lord to correct and instruct them! And it was the same to the end; and the patience of their divine Teacher was the same to the end. The ignorance, the selfishness, the constant moral mistakes they made and betrayed, the different ways in which they crossed the mind of their Master, all glorify the goodness that waited on them. And it may remind us also of Him who bore with Israel's manners in the wilderness for forty years. And it may be also a remembrancer to ourselves of much of that patience and grace which we are daily experiencing at the same hand.

Discipline, the discipline of a child, is illustrated in Jacob, as we observed at the beginning, ere we began to consider his story, and as we now have seen it to be. And discipline is healthful, and does good like a medicine. If we need it, it is the *only* thing for us. When in the days of Samuel, Israel asked for a king, would it have been well for them, if the Lord had given them David? The Lord had David in reserve for them; but would it have been seasonable, would it have been healthful for them, if David had been given to them at once, when with a rebellious will they were asking for a king? Surely, they must first be made to know the bitterness of their own way. A Saul must be given when Israel asks a king. This was discipline, and this was the only thing that would have been healthful for them. But when they have tasted the bitterness of their own way, in pity of their misery, the Lord will bring out that which He has in reserve for them, the man after His own heart that shall fulfil all His pleasure.

How perfect was all this! Had David been given to Israel in the day of 1 Sam. xi. the whole moral of the story would have been lost to us. But the love is the same, whether it be discipline or consolation, medicine or food.

This is the characteristic lesson we learn from the story of our patriarch.

With Machpelah and his burial, Jacob then *ends* these dying intercourses with his sons, as he had *begun* them. xlvii. 29, xlix. 29. He had Joseph's word and oath already on this matter, and now he must put all of them under the same engagements to him about it. Death was more important to him than life. Life kept him in Egypt, death would restore him to Canaan. Death linked him with the God and the promise of his fathers. The hopes of faith lay beyond life, and outside

Egypt. In spirit he was saying, Absent from the body, present with the Lord; "Confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." As far as patriarchal faith could utter this, Jacob was uttering it. And at the very last we read, "When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."

It was surely no barren or unfruitful time he had spent in Egypt. Though to him and to his hands the business of life was all over, he was not *rusting* out, as we had to say of Isaac. Jacob's silence was husbandry. We rejoice in these last days as his best days. We rejoice still more in the grace which provided this pause for him at the end of his journey, that, in the language of the Psalmist, he might recover strength before he went hence, and was no more seen.

Gracious indeed is it towards all of us His elect ones, to have such a sight as this, such a specimen (may I so call it?) of divine patience, wisdom, and goodness, as this. It is peculiar indeed, having its own place amid the infinite forms and characters which grace assumes in relation to the need of the saints. Jacob's last days were his golden days. To others, to their flocks and herds, Egypt was a land of Goshen; but it was not to Jacob's flocks and herds, for we do not read that he had any; but it was to Jacob's *soul* that Egypt was a Goshen, the very richest, fairest, best-watered land his spirit had ever enjoyed. It was more really the gate of heaven to him than Bethel had been. It was more the face of God to him than Peniel had been. He had the Lord in secret and in silence with him there, but in real, living power. With all that would naturally have kept him at home on the earth he was a stranger. In Egypt Jacob was a delivered, extricated man, as from the beginning and all through he had been a chosen and a called one.

Are we learning that which God was teaching him there? Are we seeking, with more single heart, the portion of God's strangers and pilgrims, thinking rather of Machpelah than of Egypt, of the rapture that links us with the promise, than of all the daily growing prosperity of this present evil world?

JOSEPH.

GENESIS XXXVII.-L.

Joseph becomes principal in the narratives of the Book of Genesis as soon as we reach chap. xxxvii., and so continues, I may say, to the end. So that I now pro-

pose to close with this paper on "Joseph," referring to the others, entitled "Enoch," "Noah," "Abraham," "Isaac," "Jacob," as if they had been already read.

Joseph's story has its peculiarity in the midst of the things of Genesis--its own mystery, and its characteristic moral; as the others have. *Election*, as we have seen, was illustrated in Abraham; *sonship*, or the adoption of the elect one, in Isaac; *discipline* of the adopted one in Jacob; and now in Joseph, *heirship* is to be.

All this is a divine order.

And, consistently with this, in Joseph we get sufferings before glories, or before the inheritance of the kingdom; all this realizing that word of the apostle, "If children, then heirs ... if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

For while discipline attaches to us as children, sufferings go before us as heirs; and this gives us the distinction between Jacob and Joseph. It is discipline we see in Jacob, discipline leading him as a child, under the hand of the Father of his spirit, to a participation of God's holiness. It is sufferings, martyr-sufferings, sufferings for righteousness, we see in Joseph, marking his path to glories.

And this is the crowning thing; and thus it comes as the closing thing, in this wondrous Book of Genesis--after this manner perfect in its structure, as it is truthful in its records. One moral after another is studied, one secret after another is revealed, in the artless family scenes which constitute its materials; and in them we learn our calling, the sources and the issues of our history, from our election to our inheritance.

Thus is it for our learning in this Book of Genesis.

But as yet, while we are in this Book, there is no *law*. We are taught that this was so in Romans v. 13, 14. But we might have perceived it for ourselves. Because, in dispensational age, so to speak, the time of this Book was the time of *infancy*. The elect were as children who had never left home, never as yet been under a schoolmaster.

Neither is there any *miracle*. I mean no miracle by the hand of man. For power would no more have suited such hands, than law or a schoolmaster would have suited such an age. And, besides, there was no mission or apostleship to seal. Miracles or "signs following" were not demanded as credentials of a mission. But as soon as we leave this Book, and enter Exodus, we get a mission or an apostleship, and then we get miracles, as seals, to accredit it.

So that what we do not get is just as fitting, from its absence, as what we do get. Neither power nor law would have been in season, and accordingly neither

power nor law do we get.

But I will now pass on to Joseph, or to chapters xxxvii.-l.

The materials which we find in these chapters, and which form the history of Joseph, may be separated into four parts:

1. His early times at home in his father's house, in the land of Canaan.
2. His life, as a separated man, in Egypt.
3. His recovery of his kindred, his father and his brethren, and the results of such recovery.
4. His latter times in the land of Egypt till the day of his death.

This may be received as the contents of this wondrous story. The way in which it is told has been witnessed to by the sympathies and sensibilities of thousands of hearts in every generation.

Part I. (xxxvii. xxxviii.)--As soon as we enter on the history, the heir is at once and immediately seen in Joseph. His dreams are dreams of *glory*. But *sufferings* as quickly form his present reality.

The story begins by Joseph being a witness both *to* and *against* his brethren. He tells his father of their evil deeds, and he tells themselves of his dreams. I cannot blame him in either. I say not how far nature may have soiled him in the doing of these things; but the testimonies themselves were, I believe, under divine authority. There was One who was all perfection, as I need not say, in everything He did or said, and He bore witness against the world, and to His own glories. A want of season and of measure may have soiled these services in Joseph; for a thing out of season and beyond its measure, though right in itself, has contracted defilement. A vessel in the master's house, at times, has to *hide*, as well as to *hold*, the treasure that is in it, and should know where, and when, and how, to use it. David had the oil of Samuel, the anointing of the Lord, upon him, and he knew that the kingdom was to be his, but he veiled his glory till Abigail, by faith, owned it. And in this David may have surpassed Joseph. I say not that it was not so. But to tell of what his dreams or his visions in the Spirit had communicated to him, was of God.

And hence his sufferings. The Lord marks him as the heir of glory; he speaks of the goodness he had found, and of the high purpose of God concerning him,

and his brethren hate him. They envy him; and who can stand before envy? They had already begrudged him his father's favour, and now they hate him for God's. They hate him for his words and for his dreams; and when in the field together (as of old, it had been with Cain and Abel), they take counsel whether to slay him, to cast him into a pit, or to sell him to strangers.

And this was at a time when he was serving them. He had come a long way to inquire after their welfare, and take their pledge, and to carry them blessings from their father's house with their father's love. Such a moment was their opportunity. It was not as the bearer of good tidings that they received him; but "Behold, this dreamer cometh," they say. "This is the heir" (Matt. xxi. 38); that was the spirit of their words. For envy they deliver them; for his love they are his enemies; and at last they sell him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.

There may be different measures in the common enmity; but in a great moral sense they are all one generation. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, and we may suppose that he judged himself more answerable to the aged father for the lad, than any of them. He saves Joseph from the sword, and Judah proposes a sale of him to the merchantmen, in the stead of the pit. After such manners as these there are measures in the common enmity. As some said of Jesus, "He is a good man;" others, "Nay, but He deceiveth the people." In the parable of "the marriage of the king's son," some went to the farm, and some to the merchandize, while others were taking the servants and killing them. But the Lord speaks of all as of one generation. "The *remnant* of them," He says, "took his servants and slew them." The Judge of all the earth will surely do right, and sins will get their many stripes and their few stripes, but *the world* has cast out Jesus, and the world is the world; as here, all are the guilty brethren of Joseph; and, as the issue of their counsels and of their common hatred, he is sold to the merchantmen, and by them is carried down to the market of Egypt, for further and profitable sale there.

It is the heartlessness of all this that is specially shocking; and it is that which the prophet Amos, under the Holy Ghost, so solemnly notices in his reference to the affliction of Joseph. Chap. vi. And we, though at this distant day, may take our share of the rebuke of the prophet for like heartlessness, if we can willingly love the world which cast out the true Joseph. And what must we say, when we look on the boasted advance of everything in that world, the constant skill that is exercised in sweeping and garnishing that house which is stained with the blood of Jesus? The beds of ivory, the sound of the viols, the wine, and the chief ointments, were never so abundant as in these days. And if we can take up with life in such a world, are we true, as we ought to be, to the cross of Christ? A heartless heart we have, and a heartless world we live in, as it is heartless brethren of Joseph we are here looking at. One knows it for one's self full well; and surely, I may again say, it is this heartlessness that is principally shocking to ourselves

(if one may speak for others), as it was to the Spirit in Amos. We are not "grieved for the affliction of Joseph," we are not true to the rejection of Christ. *Worldliness is heartlessness to Him.*

What depths there are in the corruption that is in us! As here, they dipped the favoured coat, the coat that the old father had put on Joseph, they dipped it in blood, and sent it to their father with these words: "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no." This is the language of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain was laying the burthen of Abel's blood on the Lord, intimating by these words that the Lord should have been Abel's keeper, seeing He had had such respect to him and his offering. So these words of Joseph's brethren seem to lay the burthen of Joseph's blood upon the aged father, who, if he loved him as well as this coat seemed to say he did, should have looked after him better than this blood seemed to say he had.

What depths, indeed, in the revolted, corrupted heart of man! What discoveries of these depths temptation makes at times! They sinned, in all this, against their aged father, and against their unoffending brother, at a time when the love of the one had counselled, and the love of the other had undertaken, a mission to them of grace and blessing; as is said of a generation which they represent both morally and typically, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men."

Dark deeds indeed! Joseph's blood is upon themselves, let them seek to hide it as they may; and the day is before them when their sin shall find them out, and this blood upon Joseph's coat shall be a swift witness against them. For the present they do but prosper in wickedness, that they may fill up their measure. The course of Joseph's history is interrupted, that we might get this sight of them during Joseph's separation from them. Chap. xxxviii. affords it to us. And it is indeed apostasy, full departure from "the way of the Lord," in which Abraham had walked, and in which he had commanded his children and his household after him to walk. Judah deals treacherously, marrying the daughter of Shuah. The way of the Lord is utterly despised and forsaken by Judah. Still grace gets pledge here. Pharez is a second supplanter. The hope of Israel is in the womb, a blessing is in the cluster; but truly it is such a cluster of a wild vine as might well be doomed to the sickle, if sovereign, abounding grace did not say, Destroy it not. Isa. lxv. 8; Matt. i. 3.

And such is the sin of the nation of Israel, as of this, their own father Judah; and such the grace in which the nation shall stand in the latter day. Grace shall then reign in the story of Israel, as it now does in the person of every saint, elected in the sovereign good pleasure of God, and made a monument of the saving power of Christ.

We may not be prepared for this grace of God in some of its surpassing exhibitions. We may be less prepared for it than we think. Jonah was not, Ananias

was not, Peter was not. Jonah iv.; Acts ix. and x. We are not always practised, skilful weigh-masters in the use of the balances, the weights and measures of the sanctuary. Are the heartlessness of chap. xxxvii., and the defilement of chap. xxxviii., and that, too, when found together, too bad? I ask. After all this are we prepared for "repentance and remission of sins" in the grace of God? The moral sense, the natural conscience, self-righteousness, the laws of society, and the judgments of men, supply us with false weights and measures, and we carry them about with us more than we are aware of. But they are an abomination. Deut. xxv. 16. In our thoughts, the way of the harlot and the publican are worse than the easy, respectable course of the world. Had we the balances of the sanctuary, we should assay things otherwise. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

PART II. (xxxix.-xli.)--In these chapters, which give us the second part, according to our division, we have the life of Joseph while he was a separated man in the land of Egypt.

During this time we shall see the beginning of his day, or his exaltation. But ere that come, we are to witness his further sufferings--his sufferings at the hand of *strangers*.

We may, somewhat naturally, have the thought that *the Jew* is specially guilty, as far as the moral history of this world goes--specially answerable for sin against the Lord. But in this we are not fully wise. The Jew had, indeed, a special hand in the sorrows of Christ; and, nationally, Israel is under special judgment. But the Gentile is a distinct, not a different man. The ministry of our Lord Jesus tested "the world," as well as "His own." The record touching the cross is this, Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. Acts iv. All were guilty there. As the apostle of the Gentiles, in his doctrine, says, the whole world has become guilty before God. Jew and Gentile are all alike proved under sin. Rom. iii.

Our present chapters suggest this. Joseph's affliction, begun among his brethren, is now continued among strangers. His brethren had already hated him, and put him in the pit, and thence taken him to sell him as a bond-slave; an evil woman of the Egyptians now falsely accuses him, and he is put in prison, and then another Egyptian, whom he had served and befriended, forgets him and leaves him. But, however it may be with him, whether at home or abroad, God is with him. This becomes the very characteristic of his history. Chapter xxxix.; Acts vii. For, in His way with His elect, God's *sympathy* comes first, and then His *power*, the sympathy which accompanies them through their sorrow, and then

the power which delivers them out of it. We are prone to desire present ease, and would have all inconvenience and contradiction removed at once. But this is not *His* way. When at Bethany "Jesus wept;" and afterwards, but not till afterwards, He said, "Lazarus, come forth." Nature would have had the death, which had called forth the tears, anticipated. We judge that we might have been spared many a trial, and we reason it out as a clear, unquestioned conclusion, that God had power. As the friends of the family at Bethany said, Could not this man, that opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? But they reasoned imperfectly, because they reasoned partially; that is, only on the *power* of Christ.

We ought to (and we should, had we but bowels in Christ) very chiefly value the age or dispensation of His sympathy; it gives *Himself* to us in so peculiar a way. And this sympathy was eminently Joseph's, in this day of his affliction. As we said, that "God was with him" is characteristic of his condition. And he had abundant evidence of this. As soon as he is in Potiphar's house, all under his hand, committed to him by his master, prospers. And change of scene works no change in this; for as soon as he is in prison, the same record we read of him, and the same circumstances we see around him. The keeper of the prison puts the same confidence in him that Potiphar his master had; and under his hand in the prison all things prosper, as they had in the Egyptian's house. So that Joseph had full witness from God, that God was sufficient for him.

It was not for such an one to leave the help of the Lord for the help of the creature. But Joseph craves the remembrance and the sympathy of the butler, and would have him give him a good word with the king his master.

This was natural. Joseph had befriended the butler of the king, and such an one was able to befriend him. His craving of his sympathy is not to be condemned on any natural, human, or even moral grounds. But whether it was quite worthy of *Joseph* to do so may be questioned, whether it was quite the way which *faith* would have suggested.

And it comes to nothing. The butler, as we know, forgets him, and he is left for two long years in the prison. For God will still be everything to him. Help shall come, but it shall come from Himself. With the Lord, the heaviness of the night is sure to yield to the joy of the morning; and ere this season of his separation from his brethren came to an end, Joseph is released, and blessed, and honoured. It becomes the budding-time of his glories.

Excellent things indeed are found in the condition of the separated Joseph, such things as bear our thoughts to Him who is the greater than Joseph. I would just observe four of them.

1. There is great *moral beauty* in him. He was a Nazarite then, as pure an one as Daniel in like circumstances, a captive among the uncircumcised, maintaining

his circumcision, his separation to God, unspotted. 2. There is *precious spiritual gift* in him. He was a vessel in God's house, carrying the mind of Christ, and ministering that mind as an oracle of God; like Daniel again, interpreting dreams, and making known even to kings, though still in his day of humiliation, what was coming upon the earth. 3. There is the *right hand of power and dignity for him.* He is seated nearest the throne, and put in possession of those resources on which his own brethren, who had cast him out, and the whole world beside, are destined ere long to depend for preservation in the earth. 4. There is *joy, peculiar joy, prepared for him.* The king makes a marriage for him, and he becomes the head of a family among the Gentiles; and this is a source of such joy to him, that he can, in some sense, as the names of his children tell us, forget his kindred, and even rejoice in his affliction.

Surely these are excellent things found in the condition of Joseph while separated from his brethren. And in them we see the Lord Himself in this present age, the season of His separation from Israel. A child might trace the likeness; but He, who reveals to babes and sucklings, has led the way in this. In Stephen's wondrous word, in Acts vii., we get Joseph and others put in kindred place and circumstances with the Lord, who is there called "the Just One." And this is so full of interest, that though it be but incidental, we must turn aside for a little, and listen to that great voice of the Spirit of God.

Stephen appears but for a moment in the course of the divine history; but it is to fill a very eminent and distinguished place. The occasion on which he is seen, and on which he acts, is full of meaning. Jewish enmity was again doing its dark deeds, and the God of glory was again disclosing His brighter purposes.

Stephen is another witness of the Lord passing from earth to heaven, leaving the earth for a season in its unbelief and apostasy, and calling out a people for heavenly places.

Stephen's was another separating era. Abraham's had been such, and so had Joseph's, and so had that of Moses, and that of "the Just One," Jesus. The occasion of the separation from kindred to strangers, (and that is, from earth to heaven,) may be different, but it is alike separation. Abraham was separated, because God was leaving a defiled world unjudged; and unjudged defilement God cannot make His habitation, nor allow it to be the habitation of His elect. The world after the flood had defiled itself, and the Lord was leaving it in its defilement, not purifying it by a second flood; and therefore He becomes a stranger in it Himself, and calls His elect out of it with Him. Thus Abraham is a separated man. Joseph in his day was another; separated from home and kindred, like Abraham; and so Moses. But Joseph and Moses were not separated like Abraham, simply by the call of God

out of unjudged defilement, but by the enmity and persecutions of their brethren. And so Jesus, "His own," and the world made by Him refused Him, and would not know Him. Wicked hands slew Him, and the heavens received Him. And so Stephen.

Stephen is, thus, in company with these separated ones, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and "the Just One." And he is naturally directed by the Spirit, to go over their histories in this wondrous chapter. And these separated ones have, at different eras or intervals, in the progress of God's way upon earth, marked out or foreshadowed His higher or richer purposes touching heaven. For their times, as we speak, were *transitional*.

Stephen's was such. Till his day, the scene in "the Acts of the Apostles" is laid in *the earth*. In chapter i. the risen Lord had spoken to His apostles of "the kingdom of God." In the same chapter the angels had withdrawn the eyes of the men of Galilee, as they call the disciples, from gazing up into heaven, under the promise that Jesus should return to earth. When the Holy Ghost is given, as in chapter ii., under His baptism it is of things in the earth that the apostles speak. They testify that Jesus was to sit at the right hand of God in heaven, till His foes on earth were made His footstool. They then preach, that upon the repentance of Israel Jesus would return to earth with times of refreshing and restitution, and that He was exalted to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. Israel is, thus, the people, and the earth the scene, contemplated in the action or testimony of the Spirit in the apostles in these earliest chapters.

But Jewish enmity again takes its way, as it had done in many other days, even from the beginning; and divine grace takes its way also, as it had also done in such other days. And Stephen, under the Spirit of God, takes such a moment as his text. He looks back at the way of the nation, uncircumcised in heart and ear, resisting the Lord in one or another of His witnesses; and he looks back also at the way of the God of glory calling into new and peculiar blessing those whom either earthly pollution or Jewish enmity was separating or casting out.

Thus his own condition at that moment was his text, just as the condition of things in chapter ii. had been Peter's text. Peter preached from the gift of tongues; Stephen, as I may say, from his own face then shining like the face of an angel, and from the enmity of the Jews that was then pressing him and threatening him. The Spirit in Stephen takes up the moment. It was a transitional moment. It was the hour of the shining face and of the murderous stones, of the earth's enmity and of the still brighter, richer discoveries of grace calling to heaven. And Stephen looks back to other histories, histories of other elect ones, who had already filled up kindred moments in the way of God. For the people of the earth are now withstanding God in him, as they had withstood Him in others. As he tells them, they were always resisting the Holy Ghost; the children and the fathers were alike

in this, throughout all generations of the nation.

Thus, in Stephen, we are called to witness another great transitional moment. It is such a moment in the Book of the Acts, as Joseph's was in the Book of Genesis. This links Stephen and Joseph, and gives natural occasion to the Holy Ghost in Stephen to make reference, as He does, to Joseph. But if the earth is refusing Stephen a place, as his brethren had refused Joseph a place in the land of his fathers, heaven shall open to Stephen. Grace in God shall be active as enmity in man is active--and the eater shall yield meat. And heaven does therefore open in Acts vii. A ray from thence finds its way out, and gently yet brightly falls upon the face of Stephen, as the people of the earth were casting him out. And thus sealed from heaven and for heaven, he speaks of heaven, and heaven itself opens to him, and then the Holy Ghost Himself guides his eye right upward to heaven, and then his spirit is received of the Lord Jesus into heaven. All is heaven. Stephen gets the pledge or earnest of it first, then the sight of it in its wide-opened glories, and then his place in it with Jesus.

Nothing can exceed, while still in the body, the brightness of such a moment. It was the Transfiguration of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. It was beyond the measure of the patriarch's Bethel; for here the top of the ladder was disclosed, and Stephen was taught to know his place to be there with the Lord, and not at the foot of it merely with Jacob. The moment was transitional, which the time of Genesis xxviii. was not. It had its forecasting rather in the rejected, outcast Joseph finding his richer joys and brighter honours among the distant Gentiles in Egypt. Or rather, if we please, Joseph's history and Stephen's history, are, each of them in its day and its different way, the foreshadowing and the pledge of that glory and inheritance in heaven to which the Church, the election of this age, is called.

Simply and necessarily, therefore, are Joseph and Stephen linked together, as we find in Acts vii. Each of them filled the same transitional place--more vividly marked indeed in Stephen, and properly so--but each of them filled it. All was new and heavenly, as we have seen, with Stephen. It is not *downwards* but *upwards* he is commanded to look. The angels had told the men of Galilee in chapter i. to take their eyes off from heaven; the Spirit Himself bade Stephen, in chapter vii., to direct his eye right up to heaven. The glory of the terrestrial had been one, the glory of the celestial is now another. Even the gift of Tongues had not pledged heaven to the disciples in chapter ii. There was no transfiguration then, no face shining like the face of an angel. The Holy Ghost was upon the assembly in Jerusalem, but the assembly itself was not in sight of heaven as its home and inheritance. But Stephen was on the confines of the two worlds. His body was the victim of the enmity of man's world, his spirit was about to be received amid the glories of Christ's world. He was rejected by his brethren, accepted by God.

All was transitional--and fitly does he look back to Joseph and to Moses, who had been in such a place before him.

And here let me say, suggested by this allusion to Joseph and others in Acts vii., that we are not to be surprised by this typical or parabolic character of Old Testament histories. Quite otherwise. We ought to be fully prepared for it; and that, too, on a very simple principle. God, acting in these histories (we speak to His praise) acts in them (surely) *according to Himself and His counsels*. And, consequently, these histories become so many revelations of Himself, and of the purposes He is bringing to pass.

An assurance of the inspiration of the narrative does not, therefore, in the full sense, give us *God* in the narrative. There is purpose as well as veracity in it--there is an "ensample" as well as inspiration. "These things happened to them for ensamples." They happened as they are recorded. There is historic truth in them. But God brought them to pass, in order that they might be "ensamples;" and till we find this ensample, that is, the divine purpose in the history, we have not got God in it. We are to go to these narratives, be they those of Joseph or any other, very much in the mind with which the Prophet had to go to the house of the potter. Jer. xviii. He was to see a *real work* there; vessels made by the hand and skill of the workman. But there was a *lesson* in the work, as well as a reality. There was a parable in it; for the Prophet had to see God Himself at the wheel, as well as the potter. So in these histories which we get in Scripture. There is reality in them, exact truthfulness, such as inspiration secures. But there is meaning also; and till we discover that, and learn God and His purpose in the history, we have not really as yet gone down to the potter's house.

But this is only by the way, suggested by the use which the Spirit Himself, through Stephen, makes of the Old Testament stories of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, in that marvellous chapter, Acts vii.

Part III. (xlii.-lvii.)--We now come to Joseph's recovery of his father and his brethren, and its consequences.

Among the things which gave character to Joseph and his circumstances, while he was separated from his brethren, we observed this, that he was put into possession of those resources on which his brethren themselves and all the world beside were to depend for preservation in the earth. The set time for the world drawing on these resources has now arrived; and with that, the set time for Joseph's restoration to his brethren.

Joseph is now in authority. His day of humiliation and sorrow is over. He is at the right hand of the throne of Egypt, and the great executor of all rule and power in the land. None can lift up hand or foot without him. He has received the

king's ring, and he rides in the second chariot. He is the treasurer and dispenser of all the wealth of the nation, the one who opened or shut all its storehouses at his pleasure. He that *was* in the pit *is* on the throne.

This is Joseph *as* in resurrection. I say *as* in resurrection. For the thing itself--resurrection from the dead--had to wait for the day of the Son of the living God, who was to be, in His own person, alive from the dead. But though we could not have "the very image" of this great mystery, yet we have "shadows" of it, both in certain ordinances of the law, and in certain histories of the elect. The dead and the living birds of Leviticus xiv., and the two goats of Leviticus xvi., are among such ordinances; and such historical scenes as the unbinding of Isaac from the altar on Mount Moriah, or Jonah's deliverance from the whale's belly, set forth the same. And so does this season in Joseph's history, being the day of his power and authority in Egypt after his sore troubles in the pit and in the prison. It is Joseph *as* in resurrection.

The Spirit of God, in chap. xlix., using Jacob as His oracle, looks back at Joseph in this condition, and celebrates him accordingly. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." And having spoken this of Joseph, the Spirit uses it as a figure of a Greater than Joseph; for Jacob adds, "From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." We have Christ in Joseph. The risen Christ is seen as in a figure here. All power is now in Him, in heaven and on earth. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. His title to the resources of creation is sure, sealed by the dignity of the place He now fills. And the resources which He now *owns*, by-and-by He will *use* for Israel and for the whole earth, after the pattern of this mystery of Joseph. This we are now about to see.

The famine begins, and the opening of Joseph's storehouses begins, at the close of chap. xli. But the scene is then changed for a season; and the story of the brethren's repentance and acceptance is let in, as a kind of episode. But there is wonderful beauty in this. Because the restitution of all things waits, as we know, for the repentance and fulness of Israel. So that this introduction of the new matter, by way of an episode, in chapters xlii.-xlvi., is full of beauty and meaning; and the scene in Egypt, and the full opening of Joseph's stores for that land and the whole earth, are resumed in due season afterwards, in chapter xlvii. For, "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" asks the apostle, tracing, under the Spirit, the story of Israel. Rom. xi. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" So that we are prepared for this repentance of the brethren going before the full blessing of the earth.

Over this operation, this process of the softening of their hearts under the hand of Joseph, it would be impossible not to tarry for a while. I must therefore do so. Our own hearts would need something, if we were not alive to this scene, to admire and enjoy it, and be thankful for it; so full is it of the most exquisite touches of true affection, so profound in the disclosure of the moral principles of our nature, and so important in the sight it gives us of the workmanship of God by His Spirit leading sinners, through conviction and the sense of their ruined state, to repentance and newness of life.

The scene of this workmanship of God is laid in a season of need and sorrow, as is common in the ways of the God of all grace. For He does not refuse to be sought by us, when we have no help for it. It was thus with the prodigal; it is thus with Joseph's brethren; and it will, I doubt not, be found by-and-by to have been thus with a goodly portion of those who are to praise His name in glory for ever. The prodigal had no help for it, and back to his father and his father's house he must go. Joseph's brethren have no help for it now, and down to Egypt and Egypt's storehouses they must go. Mean it may be, base it may be, in the heart of man thus to turn to God, when all else is gone. But the Lord will be found by this base and selfish heart. He will condescend to enter, as some one speaks, by these despised doors of nature. For twenty long years Joseph's brethren had lived easy and prosperous, with goods laid up, and blessings plentiful around them, and Joseph and his sorrows had all been forgotten. For a time the prodigal had his money, the portion of his father's goods that had fallen to him; and with his money, as long as it lasted, he took his pleasure, his back turned upon his father. But famine touches "the far country" and "the land of Canaan," and then, whether they will or not, the father's house and Joseph's stores must be sought. See Hosea v. 15.

Thus the scene opens, and Joseph's brethren come down to Egypt to buy food.

As soon as Joseph saw them, he knew them. He "remembered the dreams which he had dreamed of them." But upon this he at once set himself to the task of restoring their souls. See xlii. 9.

Strange, and yet beautiful and excellent! His dreams had merely exalted him above them. Had he sought, therefore, simply to make good those dreams when he thus remembered them, he might at once have revealed himself, and, as the favoured sheaf in the field, or as the sun, the ruling sun, in the heavens, have had them on their faces before him. But to restore their souls, instead of exalting himself, becomes at once his purpose. This was the counsel he took in his heart, as he surveyed the moment when he might have realized his own greatness and

their humiliation, according to his dreams. How truly excellent and blessed is this! There was One, in after-days, who, when He took knowledge that He had come from God and went to God, and that the Father had put all things into His hands, rose and girded Himself, and began to wash His disciples' feet. The knowledge of His dignities only led Him to wait on the need of His saints. Who can speak the character of such a moment? But Joseph here, in the far distance, reminds me of it. "He remembered his dreams," dreams which exalted him, and that only; and yet he turns himself at once to the defiled feet, the guilty hearts, the unclean consciences, of his brethren, that he might heal, and wash, and restore them.

Strange, again I say. There was no connection between such remembrance and such action, save as grace, divine grace, of which Joseph was the witness, is known; save as the Jesus of John xiii. is understood.

"Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." This was taking them up for the good work (though the process be humbling and painful) of restoring their souls. The conscience must be faithfully dealt with, if anything be done. And Joseph aims at it at once. He makes himself strange to them. He speaks to them by an interpreter, and he speaks roughly. He must get their conscience into action, let it cost himself in personal feeling what it may. His love, for the present, must be firm; its hour for melting and tenderness is before it. It shall be *gratified* by-and-by; it must *serve* now. In the day of their sin they had said of him, "Behold, this dreamer cometh;" and now, in the day of their conviction, he says of them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come." They had once sold their brother, when their heart knew no pity; now, with all peremptoriness which knew no reserve, one of themselves is taken and bound. But all this was only, in the purpose of grace, to fix the arrow deep in the conscience, there to spend its venom, and there to lay the sentence of death. And this is done. When God acts, the power of the Spirit waits upon the counsel of love. If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then He sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. Job xxxvi. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," they all say as with one conscience, "in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

This was something; it was much; but Joseph has still to go on with the *service* of love. Had he consulted his *name* at the first, when he remembered his dreams, he would have revealed himself at once, and stood forth as the honoured one in the midst of his confounded, humbled brethren. Had he now consulted his *heart*, he would have revealed himself, and been the gratified one on the bosom of his convicted, sorrowing brethren. But he consulted neither the one nor the other. *Love was serving*; and the husbandman of the soul has, at times, like the

tiller of the ground, need of "long patience," and has to wait for the latter, as for the early rain.

This was a happy and promising, because it was a *real* beginning. But Joseph has yet to learn whether the heart of children and of brothers were in them, or whether they were still, as once they had been, reckless of a brother's cries and of a father's grief. He therefore exercises them still. Roughness and kindness, encouragements and alarms, challenges and feasts, favours and reproaches, all are used and made to work together. Though indeed all is much the same in the reckoning of a guilty conscience. Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead in the apprehensions of it. A shaken leaf is an armed host in its presence. Kindness and roughness alike alarm. They are afraid because they are brought into Joseph's house. They fear where no fear is. But all is working repentance not to be repented of; and the fruit meet for this is soon to be brought forth.

Joseph lays a plan for fully testing whether indeed a child's heart and a brother's heart were now in them.

As they are preparing the second time to return to Canaan with food for them and their households, Joseph's cup is put in Benjamin's sack--as we all know, for it is a favourite story--and they set out on their journey. But this, simple as it seems, is the crisis. Their own lips will now have to pronounce the verdict; for the question is now about to be put, whether they are as once they were, or whether a heart of flesh has been given to them. Will the sorrows of Benjamin move them, as the cries of Joseph once failed to do? Will the grief of the aged father at home plead with their heart, as once it did not? This place, this moment, was the field of Dothan again. They were returning, in spirit, to the place where all their offence was committed. In the field of Dothan, in chap. xxxvii., they had to say, Would they sacrifice their innocent brother Joseph to their lusts, their envy, and their malice? Here, when Benjamin is claimed as a captive because of the cup found in his sack--claimed as one who has forfeited life and liberty to the lord of Egypt--it is in like manner put to them to say whether they would sacrifice him, and return on their way home, easy and careless and satisfied.

Nothing can excel the skill of the wisdom of Joseph in thus bringing his brethren back, morally and in spirit, to the field in Dothan. The same question is raised here as there, and put to them solemnly. Judah, he whom his brethren shall praise, gives this question its answer. They were innocent, indeed, touching the cup. But this is nothing to their consciences, and nothing on Judah's lips. Conviction loses sight of everything but sin. Its offence is its object. "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." The brethren might have spoken of their innocency, and been somewhat hurt, that, after this manner, they were again and again misunderstood and charged falsely. They had been called spies when they were true men, and now they were handled as common thieves, though they

were honest men. They might have said this was too bad. They could bear a good deal, injurious speeches and hard usage, but to be dealt with thus, was something too much for flesh and blood to put up with. But no--nothing of this--this was not Joseph's brethren now. They had once hid their guilt under the lie which they sent to their father, now they are willing to hide their innocency touching the cup under the confession they make to Joseph. Judah stands forth to represent this new mind in them. Guiltless they were indeed in all these matters, from first to last; neither spies nor rogues; but some twenty years ago they had been guilty of what this stranger in Egypt (as they must have supposed) knew nothing, but which God and their consciences knew. They may be innocent now, but they were guilty then; and their sin, and that only, was now before them. Confession, and not vindication, is their language. "What shall we speak?" says Judah. "How shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants."

Joseph for a moment feigns as though all this was nothing to him. This may be their business, if they please, but Benjamin was his. Benjamin is the guilty one, as far as the great man in Egypt is concerned; he must remain, and the rest may take themselves home as fast as they please. "The man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

What could exceed this? I ask. Did Solomon's wisdom in settling the question between the two harlots exceed it? Did he, in a spirit of judgment befitting one who sat in the place of judgment, find out the heart of a mother? and does not Joseph here, in like wisdom from God, find out the heart of his brethren? It is all beyond admiration. The heart is indeed laid open. After these words from Joseph, Judah draws near, and with the bowels of a son and a brother pleads for Jacob and for Benjamin. "The lad" and "the old man" are the burthen of his words, for they were now the fulness of his heart. He will abide a bondman to his lord, only let "the lad" go back to "his father." Let but the father's heart be comforted, and Benjamin's innocency preserve him, and Judah will be thankful, come to himself what may.

This is everything. The sequel is now reached, the sequel which had been weighed from the beginning. The goodness of God had led to repentance. Joseph was exalted indeed; the sheaf had risen and stood upright; but "this was all the fruit, to take away their sin." So Christ is now exalted, as we read, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Acts v. 31.

And now the veil may be rent, and it shall be rent. Joseph will be made known to his brethren.

But this was a moment hard to meet and to manage. The re-appearing of one whom they had hated and sold, and the remembrance of whom had been so deeply stirring their souls, might be overwhelming. He must attemper this light

to their vision, lest it prove intolerable. But love is skilful, and has its methods and its instruments ready for occasions. "I am Joseph," he says to his brethren; but in the same breath (as the common word among us is) he adds, "Doth my father yet live?"

Exquisite indeed, in the way of grace, this was, and perfect in the skilfulness of love. Joseph could have answered this question himself. Judah's speech (the echo of which was still in his ears, for it was too precious to allow him to part with it) had already told him, that the father was still alive. But Joseph hastened to bring a third person into the scene. He could not allow the servants or officers of the palace to be present then; for this would be to expose his brethren. And yet to be alone with himself he dreaded as enough to prove too much for them. And therefore he must bring some one in, to share that moment with them; and such an one, the very best of all, was he whom Joseph's word introduces.

Perfect indeed in its place this was. It calls to my mind the scene at the well of Sychar. "I that speak unto thee am He," says the Lord to the woman who had just by His means been discovered to herself in all her old crimson sins. It was not merely, "I am He," but "I that speak unto thee am He." In these words He reveals His glory. He stands before her as Messiah, who could, as she had said, tell all things, and who had now, as she had proved, really told all things, such things as were terrible in the hearing of an awakened conscience. But He reveals it in company with the sweet, condescending, inviting grace of one who was sitting and talking with her. And this was the title of her soul to find freedom, where she might have expected to be overwhelmed. And she did find it.

What skilfulness in the ways of love! From its precious stores, I may say, in well-known words--

> "There sparkles forth whate'er is fit
> For exigence of every hour."

We only want to trust it more, and assure ourselves of it.

And there is more of this in Joseph still.

Shortly after this he has to say again to them, "I am Joseph," and to add to it, "whom ye sold into Egypt." But then he goes at once through a long tale of God's purposes in all that matter, and lets them know how important to Pharaoh, to Egypt, and to the whole world, as well as to them and to their households, his ever having left home was about to be. Love does not give them opportunity to occupy the time with thoughts of themselves. Joseph crowds a multitude of other thoughts upon their minds--and he kisses them and weeps with them.

Pharaoh's people may now, after all this, return and share the scene with

them. They can now see, in these visitors from Canaan, not Joseph's persecutors, but his brethren. They are introduced to the palace only in that character. As in the parable of the prodigal. The father will see him in his misery; and, while yet in rags and hunger and shame, kiss him and welcome him; but the household shall see him as a son at the table. "Cause every man to go out from me," had been Joseph's word, when he was going to make himself known to them; but now, the house of Pharaoh shall hear that Joseph's brethren have arrived. The spirit of that blessed One whom we learn in the Gospels breathes in all this. We are in John iv. and in Luke xv. when in Genesis xlv.

There are occasions in the story of human life which *the heart* claims entirely for itself. The Lord met such, as we all do at times. There was constant faithfulness in His dealing with the disciples. He did not let their mistakes pass. He was rebuking them very commonly, because He loved them very perfectly, and was training their souls rather than indulging Himself. But there did come a moment when faithfulness must yield up the place, and tenderness fill it. I mean, the hour of *parting*, as we get it in John xiv.-xvi. It was then too late to be faithful. Education of the soul under the rebukes of a pastor was not to go on then. "O ye of little faith," or "How is it that ye do not understand?" was not to be heard then. It was the hour of parting, and the heart had leave to take it entirely into its own hand.

Now a time of *reconciliation* is, in this, like the hour of parting. The heart claims it for itself. Tenderness alone suits it; faithfulness would be an intruder. And thus we find it with Joseph here. He wept aloud, so that the house of Pharaoh heard it. He wept on the neck of all his brethren and kissed them, fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and kissed him. And if he spoke in the midst of his tears, it was only to encourage their hearts, and give them pledges and reasons why they should be in full confidence and ease before him.[22]

Surely I may claim these rights and privileges for the hour of *parting*, and for the hour of *reconciliation.* And this was so, as we see, in this time of Joseph's restoration to his brethren. But when all this is over, and he has introduced them to Pharaoh and the palace, and they are in readiness to return to Canaan, in full preparation to bring their aged father into Egypt to Joseph, when they are just standing, Benjamin with them, and Simeon with them, and all was the exultation of a favoured and prosperous hour, one word of warning would not be out of season, and Joseph has it for them, "See that ye fall not out by the way." "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" addressed the heart of Peter much in the same

[22]Neither Pharaoh, nor Pharaoh's house, nor any in Egypt seem ever to have been told of the sin of the brethren.

spirit, and at a kindred moment, when the reconciliation, as I may call it, had been accomplished, and Peter's unbroken net had gathered 153, and he had dined with his denied Master on the sea shore.

Surely the whole of this, from first to last, is perfect. There is a moral magnificence in Scripture which makes it, of a truth, the chiefest, as we may say, of the works of God. The Spirit breathes in it all. Its tenderness, its grandeur, and its depth, are alike His. In the issue of the story of Joseph and his brethren we see something that is very excellent. The rights and the wrongs of Joseph, the claims which he had made, and the injuries he had endured, were all wonderfully answered. Whatever dignities his dreams had pledged him, he gained them all in full measure. Whatever wrongs he had suffered, they were all avenged in the very way his own heart would have chosen. The judgment of their sin against him was executed in the bosoms of the brethren themselves; not a hard word touching it passed his lips from first to last.

These were the issues of both the rights and wrongs of Joseph. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

But I must look back at all this for another moment. Conviction of conscience may be but natural, the ordinary necessary working of the soul, the absence of which would be resented as the evidence of a seared or hardened state. But when it is more than the mere stirring of the soul under the authority of nature--when the Spirit of God has produced it--He takes His own object or instrument to work by. David, under the convicting Spirit, says to God, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." And thus will it be with Israel in the day of their conviction; for their conscience will then be linked with the once rejected, crucified Jesus. As the Lord says by the prophet, I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications: and *they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced*, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. This is conviction, when the Spirit of God takes that business out of the hand of nature into His own hand. This is conscience doing its work, as the apostle speaks, "in the Holy Ghost." In such a day, under such authority and power, Israel will address themselves directly to Jesus. Isaiah liii. shows us the same in another form. And precious work this is in the soul--*needed* work still in each of us.

Now this is seen in Joseph's brethren. Another has noticed it already in a general way. But it is deeply worthy of notice. It was their sin against Joseph

they called to mind in the day of their distress. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," they say, "in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." Other sins might have been present to the conscience then. Reuben might have thought of the defilement of his father's bed, Simeon and Levi of their blood-shedding and treachery, and Judah of his marriage; but, stirred into life, not merely by the trouble which had come upon them, but by the Spirit, they are mindful of the *common* sin, and speak, as with one conscience, of their wickedness touching Joseph. And it is this which bespeaks the Spirit's work in this conviction.

Needed work, again I say, this is in every one of us. But the *fountain* has to do its work as well as the Spirit of grace. Joseph, as we saw, interpreted his sorrows, though at their wicked hands, very differently from what their fears and guilt had interpreted them. They said, and very rightly, "we are verily guilty concerning our brother;" he says, and very truly, "God did send me before you, to preserve life." And this is the gospel. We are convicted, but saved. We learn that we have destroyed ourselves, but that in Him is our help. The blood meets the spear. The fountain is opened in those very wounds which our own hands have inflicted. And this will be the experience of the Jewish election (whose history that of these brethren foreshadow, as we know) in the day of Isaiah liii. and Zechariah xiii. The cross is the witness. Faith stands before it, and there learns *ruin* and *redemption.*

In the progress of this wondrous story, the reconciliation, as we have now seen, is accomplished. Joseph has received his brethren; and all is therefore ready for Israel's full blessing. Restoration must follow conversion. Times of refreshing and restitution must come upon Israel's repentance. The aged father, with his household and flocks, is brought from Canaan, and with his sons presented to Pharaoh, and they are seated in the very best of the land, the land of Goshen in Rameses.

They were told that they might leave all their own stuff *behind* them, for all the good of the land of Egypt was *before* them. And so it proved to be. Their empty sacks had come down to Egypt at the first to be made full, and they were still to prove that there were a heart and a hand there, both equal and ready to give without measure, and the emptier they came down the fuller they would learn this.

They were but shepherds, it is true, and such were an abomination to the Egyptians. But Joseph "is not ashamed to call them brethren." Strangers they were, and pensioners; but the man of that day, the lord of Egypt, again I say, was "not ashamed to call them brethren." He owns them in the presence of the king, of the palace, and of the nation. And the king proves to be of the same mind. That they

were Joseph's brethren was enough for Pharaoh. Truly this has language in our ears. A day is at hand, when all this shall be made good in the great originals of Christ and Israel. He will return to them and say, "It is my people;" and they will say, "The Lord is my God."

But though this is great and excellent, it is not all. The earth itself has to be settled and blest, the inheritance has to be received and displayed, as the brethren, the Israel of Christ, had to be thus quickened and restored; and this we are now to see. Joseph in chapter xlvii. becomes the upholder of the world in life and order. By him life is preserved in the earth, and order maintained. And all the people are made willing in that day of his power. All is right that Joseph does, in the eyes of all the people. Their money, their cattle, their lands, and themselves, are made over to Pharaoh; and yet all pleases them, for they owe their lives to Joseph. Egypt, in those days, was a sample of the new world, the world brought back to God by *redemption*. It was a "purchased possession," just what the millennial earth is to be. Eph. i. 14. It was creation reconciled, delivered from the doom of famine, from death and the curse, by the hand of a saviour. Joseph's corn had bought the land, the cattle, and the people. All was under Pharaoh in a new character, as a purchased possession, standing in the grace of redemption. Pharaoh, who had been king of the country, is king of the country still; but he has another, a redeemer of the land and people, associated with him now, as once he had not. As in millennial days. What a picture has the hand of God drawn for us here! what a pledge have we here, yea, what a sample of the earth in the days of the kingdom!

Pharaoh had trusted Joseph, and Joseph had pledged Pharaoh, in earlier days, when as yet nothing was done. Ere the word of Joseph began to be accomplished Pharaoh had seated him in dignity and power, given him a wife from among the daughters of the excellent of the land, and put upon him a name that told already to all who read it, what he thought of him, and how he received him.[23] And Joseph, in the confidence that all would be according to the interpretations which God had given him to deliver, accepted all this at Pharaoh's hand; and then, but not till then, the plentiful years came, one after another, to make good the pledges of Joseph to Pharaoh, and to vindicate all the honours which had been conferred by Pharaoh on Joseph. See chap. xli.

[23]Zaphnath-paaneah, in the old Egyptian tongue, is said to have signified "the saviour of the world"; in the Hebrew, as we understand, it might be rendered "the revealer of secrets."

Precious notices of all that which finds its originals, its counselled and eternal reality, in the secrets which have been between God and His anointed! We have only to bow and worship; and as we gather the spoils and riches of the word of God, to rejoice and be thankful. "I rejoice in thy word as one that findeth great spoil." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches."

It was fitting that we should have this sample of the new world, or the coming millennial condition of the earth, in the history of Joseph; for, as we said at the beginning, he is the *heir*, set to represent such an one in the grace of God, after his fathers had told out, each his several part, in the same fruitful and abounding grace. *Election*, as we have seen, we got in Abraham; *sonship*, to which election predestinates us, in Isaac; *discipline*, to which sonship introduces us, in Jacob; and now, *the heir and the inheritance* which follows, closing the mystery which grace has counselled, and closing likewise the Book of Genesis, in Joseph.

There is no speech or language here, but a voice is heard, clear, full, and harmonious, by the ear that is awakened. And as we look back on Joseph alone, we see a page of sacred story, full of Jesus; a *rejected* Jesus first, a *risen and ascended* Jesus then, and now at the end, a *millennial* Jesus, Jesus in His inheritance and kingdom.

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." But what we do not get teaches us this as surely as what we do. He has formed the light and the darkness. "The day is thine, the night also is thine." In all this passing and magnificent exhibition of the inheritance, there is one whom we might have expected to see *chiefly*, and yet we see her *not at all.* Asenath the wife is not found here. She and her children get no portions in this great settlement of everything in the land; they are not so much as seen or mentioned. Is it that they were forgotten? That could not be. But she was the heavenly one, the wife given to Joseph from among the Gentiles in the day of his separation from his kindred, and her portion is more excellent than what the land in its best condition could afford her; it is in him and with him who is the lord and dispenser of it all. Asenath is lost in Joseph; or, to be seen only in Joseph.

And thus the *full* end is told at the beginning; for all this in the Book of Genesis is "the dispensation of the fulness of times," when God shall gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. And surely it is happy, beloved, in the sight of the world's present confusion, in the midst of the agitation of human thoughts which is ever around us, to learn in the mouth of such witnesses, that the end is thus before Him, and has been so from the beginning. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." His people and His purposes are alike before Him; and such truths comforted the apostles, when they found themselves in the midst of church disappointments. See 2 Tim. ii. 19.

PART IV. (xlviii.-l.)--This is rather, I might say, an appendix to the history, than the fourth part of it. It is made up of a few detached actions in Joseph's latter days.

The first thing, however, which we get is kindred with what we have seen to be the characteristic of the history itself. Chapter xlviii., which opens this fourth part, shows us the bestowing of the birthright upon Joseph; and the birthright and the inheritance are, in some sense, one.

In Israel, or under the law, the birthright carried the double portion. The firstborn was to have a double share of the father's goods; and the law enjoined that this should be his by an indefeasible title, a title that was not to be challenged. The double portion was not to be given to any other child of the family on any ground of personal affection or partiality whatever. Deut. xxi. 15-17.

But though this were so, the birthright might have been either sold or forfeited by the firstborn himself. His own acts might alienate it, though his father's partialities or prejudices could not. And we find this to have been the case. Esau sold it, and Reuben forfeited it. Genesis xxv.; 1 Chron. v. In the case of the sale of it by Esau, Jacob who bought it, of course, had title to it. The bargain and sale made it his. That is clear. But in the case of the forfeiture of it by Reuben, who is to take it? It reverted to the father; but on which of the sons would he confer it? That was a question, and it is that question which this chapter answers. It presents us with the solemnity of the aged father, dying Jacob, investing Joseph with the birthright which Reuben his firstborn had forfeited.

Upon hearing of the illness of his father, Joseph comes to his bedside, bringing his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him. None of the other sons of Jacob are present. The Spirit of God, through Jacob, has a special business with Joseph.

Jacob begins the action by reciting to Joseph the divine grant of the land of Canaan. This was a setting forth of the family estate, the property which he had to leave among his children. He then *adopts* the sons of Joseph; for this was needed to the investing of them with the rights of children, inasmuch, as, in a great legal sense, they were strangers to Abraham. Their mother was an Egyptian. They were a seed, therefore, whom the law would, in its day, have put away. Ezra x. 3. But Jacob adopts them. He takes them into the family. "And now," says he to Joseph, "thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine." They are constituted of the seed of Abraham, and made children of Jacob; and this being done, Jacob at once sets them in the place of the firstborn; for he adds immediately, "As Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."

This was a solemn act of investiture, by which the rights of the eldest, the double portion which attached to the birthright, passed over to Joseph in the per-

sons of his two sons. See 1 Chron. v.; Ezek. xlvii. 13.[24]

But we have still to ask, Why was Joseph thus preferred? The forfeited right had reverted to Jacob, and from his hand it had to be disposed of afresh. But why was it given to Joseph? Was this merely grace? I could not say so. Grace, I know, on this great occasion, takes its way; and were we duly emptied, we should delight in the way of grace, even though we ourselves might get, in its distributions, only a left-hand or Manasseh blessing. But while all this is so, I still question whether it were *merely* grace which thus conferred the rights of the eldest son upon Joseph.

I rather judge that Joseph *earned* it. If Jacob aforetime bought it, Joseph, I believe, had now earned it.

We have already, in the history, tracked his path to the inheritance. It was the path, like that of his divine Master, whose shadow in the distance he was, of sorrow and rejection and separation, and yet of righteousness and testimony. And this path had ended with praise and honour and glory in the kingdom or inheritance; and the birthright is kindred with the inheritance.

It is, therefore, easy for us to say, as we have said, that Joseph earned the birthright. Judah earned the royalty, Levi the priesthood, and so Joseph the double portion. And his father gave him a pledge, "an earnest of the inheritance," which was characteristic of this; for at the end of this action Jacob says to him, "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." This was an earnest. But not only so; it was a *sample* also. It was characteristic. It spoke of the inheritance as it was to be in the hand of Joseph. This portion had been *won*, and so had Joseph's. The sword of Jacob had gained this parcel of ground, as the patience of Joseph had gained the inheritance and the birthright; and it is according to this that the dying father afterwards celebrates him. "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him *that was separate from his brethren*." Or as Moses, the man of God, says of him, "Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

The apostle speaks of "the reward of the inheritance," words which may not sound as if they exactly suited each other; for the inheritance is of grace, and reward is of work. So the Lord speaks of giving "a crown of life," words which may also sound in the ear as somewhat discordant; for life is of grace, and a crown is a reward. But the soul accepts these things, and makes no difficulty of them. "All purchased and promised blessings be with you," said the dying martyr to his

[24]The title now bestowed was afterwards realized, when the family estate, the land of Canaan, came to be divided between the tribes; for Joseph then gets two portions in his two sons, who are treated as though they had been two distinct sons of Jacob.

wife. And he spoke wisely, as he did blessedly; for blessings in one sense are all purchased; in another, promised or given. As a sweet hymn, which we all know, has it--

"Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,
Unworthy though I be,
For me a *blood-bought free reward*,
A golden harp for me."

And Joseph, I judge, got the birthright or the inheritance in this way. It was in his hand "the reward of the inheritance." It was a bought thing, and yet a given thing; an earned thing, and yet a free thing. We see grace in the bestowment of it upon him, but we see also the fruit or issue of that path of martyr-sorrows which he, and he alone, of all Jacob's sons, had trod in patience and in triumph.

This action, therefore, is in full company with the leading character of Joseph's history. We see the heir in him, and with that the right of the firstborn, the double portion, with its earnest, "the earnest of the inheritance," made over to him, in the action of this chapter.

In the next chapter (xlix.) Joseph is only one of the many sons of Jacob--Jacob the father being principal. Joseph and his brethren are together under the eye and before the thoughts of the dying patriarch, who was led of the Spirit to tell them what should befall them in the last days. This I take no further notice of here, but refer to the history of Jacob, where I have already considered it.

In the last chapter (l.) Joseph is again principal; not, however, so much mystically as personally; that is, not as the *heir*, but as the *man*. We see Joseph himself here, his character and his virtues, rather than the lord of Egypt, his place and his dignities. And considered personally, he is perhaps the most attractive character in the book of Genesis. There is more of the fruit and force of godliness in him than in either of his fathers. We have in him the steadiest, most consistent walk in the ways of God. There is less elevation, I am sensible, than in Abraham, as of course there is less exercise of spirit than in Jacob; but through all circumstances, trials, honours, changes, he is still the man of God who walked in His fear and before Him. His history is not made up of failures and recoveries, or a doing of first works over again. It is a path of light, if not of such light as shines more and more unto the perfect day, yet of light which shines clear and calm and constant.

In his history we have not angelic visits, nor apparitions of the Lord, or audiences of divine oracles; but in Joseph himself we have a vessel used of God, because approved of Him; a very precious thing with God. It is not Peniel or Beersheba again, occasional refreshments and illuminations, but rather an abiding witness within, so that he knew the way of God, and kept it. "Until the time that *his word* came, the *word of the Lord* tried him." The authority which Egypt, in due season, owned in him, he had before owned in the Lord. He was the obedient one himself, and then became the one set in authority. He continued as with Christ in His temptations, and then he was appointed to a kingdom. Subjection was his path to honour, the due path of all the heirs of the same kingdom.

But there are some peculiarities in the story of Joseph beyond this. We do not find the altar and the tent with him, as we do with his fathers. Because it is not strangership in the earth that we see in him, but the inheritance or the kingdom, after suffering and humiliation. It is not the tent of his fathers that we see in his history, but the pit and the prison, which were his alone, and not his fathers'. The tent and the altar may duly be the symbols of their calling; the pit and the prison first, and then the throne, become the symbols of his.

And as another peculiarity, we may observe that the Lord is never called the God of Joseph, as He is called "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." But this, likewise, we may account for. Joseph was rather among the *sons* than the *fathers*. The covenant was not made with him, as it had been with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; nor was any one set aside in order that he might have the blessing. The covenant was made with Abraham separated from country, kindred, and father's house. It was renewed with Isaac, to the setting aside of Ishmael. It was renewed again with Jacob to the setting aside of Esau. But it was not renewed with Joseph; for he was only one of the sons of Jacob, and they were all alike interested in it; they were all the seed contemplated by it; and Joseph was no more of that seed than either of the others. So that we have no ground for the characteristic title, "the God of Joseph." For, while grace was displayed in the call of Abraham, and then again in the choosing of Isaac the younger, and in the choosing of Jacob the younger, it was displayed in Joseph only in its common measure in behalf of all the seed, a measure that reached to others as to him.[25]

Thus Joseph takes his place in our sight, and we look at him either *morally* or *mystically*; with his characteristic virtues, or in his peculiar typical place. But we have not quite done with him yet.

He was, I would now add, *a great weeper*.

[25]God is afterwards called "the God of Israel," as before He had been called the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Because His covenant was with the nation of Israel.

Paul says that he was "mindful" of Timothy's tears; and there were many tears in the eyes of Joseph which we might well be mindful of. David and Jonathan were weepers, as well as Paul and Timothy. But were I careful to do so, I might claim it for Joseph, that he exceeded them all. The occasions of his tears were more various. And indeed it is an earnest, real, and hearty flow of affections that we have to covet in the midst of the more cultivated and orderly attainments of this day. Tears are ofttimes precious things, and sometimes sacred too.

At the beginning, when Joseph saw conviction awakening in the conscience of his brethren, he wept. These were tears both of sorrow and of joy. He felt for them passing through the agony; but he must have rejoiced to see the needed arrow reaching its mark, and the bleeding of the wounds that followed.

He wept again when he saw Benjamin. The son of his own mother, her only child besides himself, whose birth too had been her death, and the only one in the midst of his father's children (who were all then before him) who had not been guilty of his blood. Such an one as this was at that moment seen by him in Benjamin. These tears, therefore, nature could account for.

He wept again as he saw the work of repentance going on in his brethren. In his way, he greatly longed after them; till at the last, Judah's words were too much for him; conviction of conscience had then ended in restoration of heart. "The old man" and "the lad" again and again on the lips of Judah had eloquence which prevailed, and Joseph could no longer refrain himself. He sobbed aloud, and the house of Pharaoh heard him. But these were more than the tears of nature. This was the bowels of Christ, or the tears of the Father upon the neck of the prodigal.

Each of these weepings was beautiful in its season; but we have more still.

He fell on his father's face, and wept, as his father had just yielded up the ghost. This was as the grave of Lazarus to Joseph; and there he and his Lord can weep together.

And again he wept, when, after his father's death, his brethren began to suspect his love. He was disappointed. An unworthy return to the ways of a constant, patient, serving love, made him weep--in the spirit of Him, I may say, who wept over Jerusalem. For years had he been doing all he could to win their confidence. He had nourished them and their little ones. Years had now passed, and not one rebuke of them do we find either in his life or in his ways. Grief over their departed father had just freshly given them to know what common affections they had to bind them together. He had supplied them with every reason to trust him. And yet, after all, they were fearing him. This was a terrible shock to such a heart as Joseph's. But he did not resent it, save with his tears, and renewed assurances of his diligent, faithful love. And have not such tears as these, I ask, as fine a character as tears can have? They were as the pulses of the aggrieved spirit of the Lord. "How long shall I be with you?" "Why are ye fearful?" "Have I been

so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" These were kindred pulses of an aggrieved heart in Jesus. Jesus has *sanctified* tears, and made them, like everything else that went up from Him to God, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour; Joseph and David and Paul, yea, Jonathan and Timothy too, have made them *precious*, and put them among the treasures of the Spirit in the bosom of the Church.

Such an one was Joseph, and in such company we put him; again, I say, perhaps the most attractive character in the Book of Genesis. We see in him the grace and blamelessness that we get in Isaac, the "piety," as we speak, marking him in all his relations in life. But withal, there was combination which we do not find in Isaac. There was firmness--energy as well as sensibility.

It remains for him to do the last office of this piety to the memory of his father; and he does it, we need scarcely say, in all grace and faithfulness. He buries his father, as his father had willed it, in the land of Canaan. But the whole is conducted with much solemnity--and the occasion is such, that we must wait upon it for a little moment.

In other days, worship was a magnificent ceremonial. Temples, altars, feasts, holy days, sacrifices, and the like, furnished it, and officers of different orders, in appropriate vestments, conducted it. Because in those days worship pointed onward to certain great mysteries which had then to be realized. But now these mysteries have been accomplished in the manifestation of Christ, His person, work, sufferings, and victories--so that gorgeous worship is now but a reproach on all that which is found in Him, in its full substance and efficacy.

So as to funerals, as well as worship. In other days they were to be gorgeous. Because resurrection was then only in prospect; and funerals then were a kind of pledge of the expected resurrection; and it was fitting that the pledge should be magnificent according to the glory of that which it pledged. But now, since resurrection has been realized in the person of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the gorgeous funeral, like the ceremonious worship, is rather a reproach, as though the great mystery itself had not been yet realized in its substance and efficacy. For it is not funereal pomp which is now the pledge of our coming resurrection--the resurrection of the Lord is that, the first-fruits of a promised harvest.

Accordingly, worship and funerals are now, in like simplicity, to bespeak the Church's faith in *accomplished* mysteries. We are now in sight of the victory of the Lord Jesus. We no longer give or receive pledges of it, as in ordinances, but we celebrate it. Joseph of Arimathea gave His body a costly burial, as Joseph the son

of Jacob here gives the body of his loved and honoured father. We read of Jesus: "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death." In that day of Joseph of Arimathea the grave had not been spoiled; and pledges therefore--like pledges with these in the day of the Patriarch--might still be given. But in the burial of the Lord Jesus we properly see the last of these pledges; because in Him we see the first-fruits of them that slept. The grave-clothes and the napkins lie in the empty sepulchre as spoils of a glorious war, and trophies which tell of glorious victory. Death was overthrown, and faith now celebrates what offices and usages, as well as ordinances and ceremonies, had once only pledged and foreshadowed. And let me add, that faith did learn this lesson, for the burial which followed that of Jesus had neither its embalming nor its magnificence. It was shortly disposed of, reverently withal, and lovingly. "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Had we faith, deeply should we prize all this. Our privileges are great indeed. In the services of the house of God now, the table has succeeded the altar, and instead of a sacrifice we have a feast upon a sacrifice. And so have we to see death and burial, too, in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

These things we notice in connection with Jacob's funeral. His death has its moral operation in the family, bringing out (as is often the case when the head of a family is removed) what before was not suspected to be there. But I must meditate on this for a while.

The simplicity of patriarchal *faith* is very remarkable. It was like their manners--beautiful from their artlessness. There was nothing of the spirit of bondage in the Genesis-saints. The patriarchs walked in the assurance of this, that God was their God, His promises their portion, and the city and land of the glory their inheritance. They lived and died in this spirit of faith. No suspicions or reserves, no questionings, no mistrust of grace, defiles their souls. And this is surely the more strange because, while we nowhere among them trace this spirit of bondage, we see it everywhere else, immediately after we leave the Book of Genesis, and then all through Scripture. It would be vain to follow all the notices of it which Scripture furnishes. It works naturally and abundantly in us. Surely we know it in ourselves, and see it in all around us.

How is it, then, that it does not betray itself in the Patriarchs? Was it because they were such constant witnesses to themselves of the grace and election of God, and had never heard the voice of the law? This helped to form their minds, we may be sure. But besides this, this absence of the spirit of bondage was beautifully consistent with their dispensational standing; for they were as children who had never as yet been from home. They were in infancy, and they could no more

move in the presence of God in a spirit of fear and uncertainty, than a child, ere he left home, could be tempted to question his title to the nurture and shelter of his father's house. And it is of the moral beauty and perfection of this infant Book of Genesis that we see this child-like, unquestioning faith in the saints of God there. They are faulty, and that, too, at times, through want of faith, when certain circumstances press them; but their souls are never defiled by a spirit of mistrust and bondage. We see this throughout--at least till we reach the moment when we are taking leave of the Book, and have gone beyond what is properly the patriarchal character of it. I mean, in Joseph's brethren, as soon as Jacob's funeral is over.

It then appeared that they had not been trusting their brother with a guileless, happy confidence. There had been an object of common interest between them, and that had been too much the secret of their confidence, instead of Joseph himself. They had not boldness by reason of what Joseph was, and of what he had done, but they had trusted in a circumstance. Jacob's presence was the stay of their hearts. They had repented; they had been convicted and quickened; but still, their confidence did not honour Joseph, as Joseph had richly deserved at their hands.

And this may have a word for us. We may ask ourselves, if countenance and fellowship of others were withdrawn, would it be found that our whole confidence has all along been in Jesus? that we have so learnt grace, that we can abide the presence of unveiled glory? that the removal of a Jacob clouds not the atmosphere in which our souls have been dwelling?

But we are now reaching the very end of the times of Joseph. However, ere we witness his death, we have (seasonable for us to notice this in this eventful day of ours) a fine instance of *faith's acquaintance with the course of the world's history.*

I do not speak of a *prophet's* knowledge of what is about to be among the nations, such as Daniel had, when he told of the rise of one beast after another, and of the Great Image from its head of gold down to its toes of iron and clay. Such knowledge was by the *Spirit*, the Lord filling the heart of Daniel, and of others like him, with His own light. I speak only of *faith's* knowledge of that course of things which the history of the nations is to take.

Joseph says to his brethren, "I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

The children of Israel were at that time very happy in the land of Egypt. They were in the full favour of the king; they were in possession of the richest district in the country, and they saw one of themselves the second person in the

kingdom. Not a single symptom of danger or of change appeared in all their condition. And Joseph himself was as happy as circumstances could make him. "He saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees."

But in the midst of all this, Joseph speaks of *God visiting them*; words which bespeak days of sorrow to be at hand, such days as that God would then be their only friend and helper.

Strange this was, very strange! Who could believe it? Was Joseph dreaming? statesmen and politicians might have said. But no; Joseph was not dreaming. God's word was his wisdom. The divine oracle in chapter xv. had forewarned, that Egypt would afflict Israel, but that God would befriend them, and bring them back to Canaan--and this word from God was everything to Joseph, was everything to faith--appearances were nothing. The oracle had spoken it. Joseph believed it and remembered it. And thus by faith Joseph saw Israel's *affliction* in the day of Israel's brightest promise and prosperity--he saw Egypt's *enmity* in this day of Egypt's friendship--he saw *brick-kilns and task-masters* in the fair fields and sunny harvest of Goshen. As Noah, by like faith, had once seen a deluged world during 120 years of successive sowing times and reaping times, vintages and summer gatherings, times of buying and selling, planting and building.

This was faith's acquaintance with the coming course of things. And faith, in this our day, is to be a like politician, and to know something of the course of things by the light of God's word, in the face of all appearances. And this is the only act in Joseph's life which is recorded as of faith in Heb. xi. It is thus strikingly distinguished in the midst of so many acts of faith and godliness, and of such a course of walking with God, as we have seen in him. But it was worthy to be thus signalized. It was a great witness of Joseph's living upon the word of God, in the midst of the world's attractions and occupations, and with a mind superior to all present appearances. Abraham had been instructed, through divine visions and audiences, about this coming history of Israel in Egypt; Joseph only used what Abraham had received. We have no visits of the Lord to Joseph, as we have to Abraham. Joseph, if you please, was not in Abraham's elevation. But we have in him what is morally the chiefest, the light and certainty of a believing mind, the apprehensions and decisions of faith. He remembered what Abraham had heard, and he acted on what he remembered. What he wanted in personal elevation, as an oracle of God, he had, in moral power, as a believer in God. And if I must needs choose between them, I would rather *believe* than be *inspired*. And Joseph believed, when, as we read, "he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." Heb. xi. 22. This was *faith's political knowledge*, as I may speak--faith's acquaintance with the things which were coming on the earth. And this is that which made a Noah or a Joseph

wiser than all the senators of the kingdoms. We know well how Joseph's words were vindicated, and how very unlooked for brick-kilns defiled the goodly lands of Goshen, and task-masters drove Israel to their work. Just as before, in Noah's day, waters covered the very tops of the mountains, and a ship, apparently in all folly built for dry land, was soon the only ark of safety in a watery world.

And I do ask, Is it not to be thus with faith still? Have we not warrant, by faith in the word of God, to know the course which this world, with all its growing refinement and varied progress, is taking every hour? Have we not reason to know that it is on its way to judgment? Indeed we have. The Lord Jesus has been rejected in this world. That is the fact which gives the world its character with God. No advance in civil order and cultivation, no spread of even His own truth among the nations, can avail to relieve the world of the judgment that awaits it because of this deed. Let the day be as bright as was the day of the Egyptian Joseph to Israel, faith knows that "the polished surface" is soon to be broken up. Circumstances never give faith its object. It is the word of God that does that; and circumstances and appearances are not to be allowed to take the eye of faith off its object. The house, swept and garnished as it is at present, promises much. So did the land of Rameses and the friendship of Pharaoh, in the days of Gen. 50. But such promises are idle words in the ear of faith; it regards them not. As Jeremiah said to the king of Judah, when the allied army had arrived, and the hostile army had broken up and gone away, "Deceive not yourselves;" so faith says, in this hour, to the generation that is boasting in progress, "Deceive not yourselves." Faith says this with boldness; for well it knows, that the last state of the swept and garnished house is worse than the first.

Joseph then gave proof that he believed what he testified. Like Jacob, his heart was in Canaan, the land of the covenant, the land of his father's sepulchres. And, like Jacob, he took an oath of his brethren, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The unseen world was the real thing with him, as it had been with his fathers. The call of God had linked them all with that which lay beyond death, and their thoughts and their hearts were there before themselves. It was as natural for them to die as to live.

"Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old."

His brethren, the children of Israel, were true to him, as he had been to his father Jacob. They embalmed his body at once. Afterwards, Moses carried it with him out of Egypt; and, at the last, Joshua buried it in Shechem in the land of Canaan. See Gen. 50. 26; Ex. xiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32.

We thus close the story of Joseph, and with it the Book of Genesis, the book of the creation and of the first ways of God, the book also of the patriarchs, the earliest

families of the children of men, and the infant age of the elect of God.

We are sensible, I think, when we leave this book, that in some sense we are getting on lower ground. I think this will be generally felt.

In Genesis, the Lord is rather *manifesting Himself*; afterwards He is *exposing man.* Man was not under law, as we have said, during the times of this book. He was set to learn God under many and different expressions and revelations of Himself. But as soon as law enters, and that is very quickly after we leave this book, man is necessarily brought forward, and we have to see him, not simply as under the call of God, but in his own place and character. And surely this is enough to make us sensible of being, in some sense, on lower ground. Of course, in the unfolding of counsels, in the bringing forth of God's resources upon man's failures, and in the further manifestations of God Himself upon the exposure of man, we are advancing all through the volume from beginning to end.

But, all-various and wondrous as these counsels are, which get their disclosure as we proceed through Scripture, let the wisdom of God be never so manifold, as we know it is, yet we may say, every part of it gets some notice or foreshadowing in this Book of Genesis. These are faint and obscure; but the rudiments of the whole language are found in this introductory and infant lesson. Atonement, faith, judgment, glory, government, calling, the kingdom, the Church, Israel, the nations, covenants, promises, prophecies, with the blessed God Himself in His holiness, love, and truth, the doings of His hand, and the workmanship and fruits of His Spirit, all these and the like appear in this book. Creation was displayed at the beginning. Soiled and ruined under the hand of man, redemption was published. The heavens and the earth are then shown to be the scenes of redemption (as they had been at the first of creation) in the histories of *Enoch* and *Noah.* And then in *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *Joseph* we get man (the leading subject of redemption, as of course he is) in his election, adoption, discipline, and inheritance. These mysteries have been looked at in this series, and they lie under the eye, and for the observation of our souls, as we pass on from one of these histories to another.

And let us learn to say, beloved, to His praise who has spread out such living creations before us, that if the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork, so with no less clearness and certainty do the pages of Scripture bespeak the breathings of His Spirit.

THE BOOK OF JOB.
JAMES v. 11.

"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face"

May surely be said, upon the reading of this deeply affecting story. Said, too, with peculiar fitness and fulness of truth, as though the thought of the Christian poet had been suggested by the tale of the inspired historian. The frown was specially dark and lowering, the smile behind it brilliantly beaming and happy. The veil was very thick, but the glory within very bright. The boastings of the Lord in His servant were above the noise of all the water-floods.

"The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower"

may as surely be the motto for the story also. For let us wait only for a little, and the fruit of the travail will be precious beyond all expectation. Very bitter indeed was the bud, but very sweet indeed was the flower. It had to ripen under the pruning of the sprigs and the taking away of the branches (Isaiah xviii. 5), but it tells, in the end, the skill and patience of its divine husbandman. I would, however, rather trace some of the principles of this beautiful Book, than thus at the beginning more largely anticipate the moral of it.

Resurrection, called by the Lord "the power of God," or, at least, one of the ways of that power (Matthew xxii. 29), has been made known, through different witnesses, and in divers manners, from the very beginning. And connected as it is with redemption, the great principle of God's way and the secret of His purposes, it must have been so.

It was intimated in the creation of the beautiful scene around us, for the world itself was called forth from the grave of the deep. The material was without form, and darkness was upon the face of it, but light was commanded to shine out of darkness, and beauty and order were caused to arise. See Hebrews xi. 3.

It declared itself in the formation of Eve. Then again in the earliest promise about the bruised Seed of the woman. It was kept in memory in Seth given in the place of Abel whom Cain slew; and then again in the line of the fathers before the flood. But still more illustriously was it published in Noah. "Every thing in the earth shall die," says the Lord to him, "but with thee will I establish my covenant;" thus disclosing the secret, that the earth was to be established according to the purpose of God, as in resurrection, stability, and beauty.

So, after these earlier fathers, Abraham was to have both a family and an in-

heritance on the same principle. He and his generations after him were taught resurrection in the mystery of the barren woman keeping house. The covenant blessing was linked with the risen family. Ishmael may get possessions, and promises too, but the covenant was with Isaac.

And more marvellously still, not to pause longer over other witnesses of it, we see resurrection in the blessed history of "the Word made flesh." We might indeed have forejudged that it would have been otherwise. For in Christ, flesh was without taint. Here was "a holy thing." But even of such we have now to say, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." Christ known by us now is Christ in resurrection. And this is enough to let us know assuredly, that resurrection is the principle of all the divine action, and the secret of the covenant.[26]

But resurrection has also been, from the beginning, an article of the faith of God's people; and, being such, it was also the lesson they had to learn and to practise, the principle of their life; because the principle of a divine dispensation is ever the rule and character of the saints' conduct. The purchase and occupation of the burying field at Machpelah, tell us that the Genesis-fathers had learnt the lesson. Moses learnt and practised it, when he chose affliction with the people of God, having respect to the recompense of the reward. David was in the power of it, when he made the covenant, or resurrection-promise, all his salvation and all his desire, though his house, his present house, was not to grow. 2 Sam. xxiii. The whole nation of Israel were taught it, again and again, by their prophets, and by-and-by they will learn it, and then witness it to the whole world, the dry bones living again, the winter-beaten teil tree flourishing again; for "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" The Lord Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of faith," in His day, I need not say, practised this lesson to all perfection. And each of us, His saints and people, is set down to it every day, that we "may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings."

By the life of faith the elders obtained a good report. And so the saints in every age. For "without faith it is impossible to please Him;" that faith which trusts Him as a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, which respects the unseen and the future. They, of whom the world was not worthy, practised the life of faith, the life of dead and risen people. Hebrews xi. Stephen before the

[26]All orders of His creatures in all places of His dominions witness Him as the *living* God; but in the history of redeemed sinners He is witnessed as the living God in *victory*. This is His glory; and resurrection should be prized by us as the display of it. The sepulchre with the grave-clothes lying in order, and the napkin which had been about the head, are the trophies of such victory. John xx. 6, 7. The history of redeemed sinners celebrates Him thus. To hesitate about resurrection is to betray ignorance of God, and of the power that is His. See Matthew xxii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 34.

council tells us the same. Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, in his account, were great witnesses of this same life; and he himself, at that moment, after the pattern of his master, Jesus, was exhibiting the strength and virtues of it, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and apprehending, through the same Spirit, the brightest joys and glories of it. Acts vii.

Now, I believe that the leading purpose of the Book of Job is to exhibit this. It is the story of an elect one, in early patriarchal days, a child of resurrection, set down to learn the lesson of resurrection. His celebrated confession tells us that resurrection was understood by him as a doctrine, while the whole story tells us, that he had still to know the power of it in his soul. It was an article of his faith, but not the principle of his life.

And a sore lesson it was to him, hard indeed to learn and digest. He did not like (and which of us does like?) to take the sentence of death into himself, that he might not trust in himself, or in his circumstances in life, or his condition by nature, but in God who raises the dead. "I shall die in my nest," was his thought and his hope. But he was to see his nest rifled of all with which nature had filled it, and with which circumstances had adorned it.

Such is, I believe, the leading purpose of the Spirit of God in this Book. This honoured and cherished saint had to learn the power of the calling of all the elect, practically and personally, the life of faith, or the lesson of resurrection. And it may be a consolation for us, beloved, who know ourselves to be little among them, to read, in the records which we have of them, that all have not been equally apt and bright scholars in that school, and that all, in different measures, have failed in it, as well as made attainments in it.

How unworthily of it, for instance, did Abraham behave, how little like a dead and risen man, a man of faith, when he denied his wife to the Egyptian, and yet how beautifully did he carry himself, as such, when he surrendered the choice of the land to his younger kinsman. And even our own Apostle, the aptest scholar in the school, the constant witness of this calling to others, and the energetic disciple of the power of it in his own soul, in a moment when the fear of man brought with it a snare, makes this very doctrine the covert of a guileful thought. Acts xxiii. 6.

Encouragements and consolations visit the soul from all this. Happy is it to know, that our present lesson, as those who are dead, and whose life is hid with Christ in God, has been the lesson of the elect from the beginning--that on many a bright and hallowed occasion they practised that lesson to the glory of their Lord, that at times they found it hard, and at times failed in it. This tale of the soul is well understood by us. Only we, living in New Testament times, are set down

to learn the same lesson in the still ampler page, and after the clearer method, in which it is now taught us in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is some difference, let me observe, nay, I would say, distance, between a *righteous* and a *devoted* man. No saint is a devoted one, who has not been practising this lesson of which I have been speaking. The measure of his devotedness may be said to be according to his attainment in it, according to the energy he is exercising as a man dead and risen with Christ. At the beginning of this history, Job was a righteous man. He was spoken well of again and again, in the very face of his accuser. But he was not a devoted man. The whisper of his heart, as I noticed before, was this, "I shall die in my nest." Accepted he was, as a sinner who knew his living and triumphant Redeemer, godly and upright beyond his fellows, but withal, as to the power that wrought in his soul, he was not a dead and risen man.

Such also, I might add, was Agur in the Book of Proverbs. He was godly, and of a lowly, self-judging spirit. He makes a good confession of human blindness and pravity, of the unsearchable glories of God, the purity and preciousness of His word, and of the security of all who trust in Him. Prov. xxx. 1-9. He was a man of God, and walked in a good spirit. But he was not a devoted man. He did not know how to abound and how to suffer need. He dreaded poverty lest he should steal, and riches lest he should deny God. He was not prepared for changes. Neither was Job. But Paul was. He had surrendered himself to Christ, as they had not. According to the power that wrought in his soul, Paul was a dead and risen man. He was ready to be "emptied from vessel to vessel." He was instructed both to be full and to be hungry. He could do all things through Christ strengthening him. See that devoted man, that dead and risen man, in the closing chapters of Acts. xx.-xxviii. He is in the midst of a weeping company of brethren at Miletus, and in the bosom of a loving Christian household at Tyre. But were those, the greenest spots on earth to a saint, where, if any where, the foot of the mystic ladder is felt to rest, and the fond heart lingers and says, Let us make tabernacles here, able to detain him? No. Even there, the dear, devoted Apostle carried a heart thoroughly surrendered to Christ. "What mean ye," says he, "to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." He would not be kept. And on from thence he goes, along the coast of Syria up to Jerusalem, and then for two long years, apart from brethren, in perils by sea and land, under insults and wrongs, a single heart and devoted affection bearing him through all.

A good conscience alone is not up to all this. Mere righteousness will not take such a journey. There must be that singleness of eye to Christ, that principle of devotedness, which reckons upon death and resurrection with Jesus. Job was righteous, but he was not prepared for such shifting scenery as this. He loved the

green spot and the feathered nest. Changes come, and changes are too much for him. But God, in the love wherewith He loved him, as his heavenly Father, puts him to school, to learn the lesson of a child of resurrection, to be a partaker of "*His* holiness," the holiness not merely of a right or pure-minded man, but *the holiness that suits the call of God*, the holiness of a dead and risen man, one of the pilgrim family, one of God's strangers in the world. Heb. xii. 9, 10.

Job was chastened to be partaker of such a holiness as this. Not that trials and troubles, like his, are essential to the learning of this lesson. A very common method it is, indeed, with our heavenly Father, in His wisdom. But Paul set himself daily to practise that lesson, without the instructions of griefs and losses in either body or estate. Phil. iii. In the fervent labourings of the spirit within, he exercised himself in it every day. And so should we. We are to dread the Laodicean state, satisfaction with present condition or attainment. The Laodicean was not a Pharisee, or a self-righteous man of religion. He was a professor, it may be, of very correct notions and judgments, but in a spirit of self-complacency, he did not cherish increasing freshness and vigour in the ways of the Lord.

Arise, depart; for this is not your rest, says the Spirit by the Prophet. And why? Why is it not to be our rest? "It is polluted," he adds. He does not say it is sorrowful, it is disappointing, it is unsatisfying, but it is polluted. The quickened soul is to gather from the *moral* and not from the *circumstances* of the scene here, its reasons for cherishing within it the power of Christ's resurrection. The dove outside the ark did not fear the snare of the fowler, but found no rest for the sole of her foot on the unpurged ground.

It is humbling to sit down and delineate what has been so poorly reached in personal power. But "a beauteous light" may be seen "from far," and as such, some of us descry and hail the virtues of the risen life.

A dead and risen man will have neither his *springs* nor his *objects* here. His principles of action will be found in Christ, and his expectations in the coming kingdom. He is taken out of all the advantages and adornings of the flesh into the righteousness of God, and then, livingly and practically, is struggling up the hill, having, in spirit, left the low level of the world, abating the force of nature, and the fascination of nature's circumstances, and taking the affections from things on earth to give them to those which are with Christ above. He has lost himself, but he has won Christ. He has taken leave of the course of the world which goes its rounds on the plain beneath, and is ascending after Jesus.

He lets the world know that it could never provide him with his object. In the midst of its kingdoms and delights he is a stranger still. And virtues and qualities of heart he practises that are of like divine excellence. He can, like his Master, hide the glory to which God has appointed him, and be nothing in the present scene. Abraham did not tell every Canaanite whom he chanced to meet,

that he was the heir of the country. In the ears of the children of Heth he said, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." He was content to be, and (what is still harder) to be thought to be, a homeless, houseless man. So David, another of the dead and risen family, when hunted and driven by the evil thing then in power, though the oil of Samuel was upon him, God's own consecration to the throne, he did not publish it. That was the secret and the joy of faith. But he did not publish it. He did not traffic with it among men--he did not talk of himself in connection with that which the world could value. He was rather, in his own reckoning before men, no better than "a dead dog" or "a flea."

Oh, precious faith! Oh, holy and triumphant faith! But this was an elevation which Job had to reach. He was not, according to the power which wrought in his soul, of this generation. Not that his condition in life made him proud, or self-indulgent, or indifferent to others. But he *valued* his condition. With what eloquence does he describe it. Chapter xxix. The minuteness with which he remembers it tells us with what fondness he had embraced it. The eloquence with which he describes it (and nothing can exceed that) betrays with what fervour of heart he had lingered over it, in the day of its bloom and beauty. He loved his condition and circumstances in life, his place, his character, his estimation, his dignities and praise among men. Godly he was, truly and admirably so. There was none like him in the earth. But his place in the earth was important to him. He was largely ready to communicate and to serve, but he communicated and served as a patron or a benefactor. And he desired continuance. "I shall multiply my days as the sand," was his calculation. Hence the great end of his trial, and the purpose of recording it. For this Book gives us the story of a saint in patriarchal days, or rather, the story of his trials, trials through which he was to learn the common lesson, according to the common calling, that we are a dead and risen people. Job came, I believe, before Abraham, but he did not come before this lesson; for it had been taught, as we have seen, from the beginning; Adam and Abel, and the line of Seth through Enoch and Noah, had already practised it. And Job, after them, is set down to the same lesson, only engraven in somewhat deeper and darker lines.

Such, generally, I believe, was Job, and such his history. A solitary saint he was; at least, not linked with dispensational arrangements, or with the peculiar covenanted family, and before the call of God was manifested in the person of Abraham. This, however, adds exceeding value to the Book. For it is, thus, a witness of the religion of God's people in the most detached and independent condition. Time and place do not connect him with the ecclesiastical order or course of things at all. But still, the faith of the elect of God was his faith, their truths his truths, their calling his calling, their hopes his hopes. We have Adam, and Seth, and Noah, and Shem, and Job, and Abraham, Moses, Prophets, Apostles,

and ourselves, till the number of the elect be accomplished, learning the joy and the song of redemption. As we sometimes sing together--

"Then shall countless myriads, wearing
Robes made white in Jesu's blood,
Palms (like rested pilgrims) bearing,
Stand around the throne of God.

"These, redeemed from every nation,
Shall in triumph bless His name;
Every voice shall cry, 'Salvation
To our God and to the Lamb.'"

Not only, however, the substance or materials, but the very style of the Book is in the analogy of the whole inspired volume. It does not teach doctrines formally, after the method of a science; it rather assumes them, or lets them publish themselves incidentally. Even in the Epistles this is the common way. The great revelation of doctrines made there comes out, more commonly, in the way of either enforcing results, or in answer to inquiries, or in defence of truth against gainsayers or corrupters. So in this Book, doctrines are assumed, or delivered incidentally; the more direct object, as I have suggested, being this--to exhibit a soul set to learn, through trials and sorrows, the common lesson, the power of our calling, that our hopes are neither in the world, nor from the flesh, but in living scenes, with Jesus, beyond all that is here.

And deeply affecting as a narrative of trying and sorrowing events it surely is, for the events themselves are deeply touching. But they are all ordinary, or such as are "common to man." Robbers carry off his oxen and asses. Lightning destroys his flocks. A high wind blows down his house, and kills his children. And, at last, a sore disease breaks out on his body from head to foot.

Each of these might have happened to his ungodly neighbour, as well as to him. In the mere matter of these afflictions, there was nothing that distinguished him as a child of God. They were not the sufferings of righteousness from the hand of man, the sufferings of a martyr. They were such as were "common to man." But still they were all under the exactest inspection and admeasurement of his heavenly Father, all in the way of appointment and of discipline flowing from heavenly interests, and divine relationships. And all, too, the result of great transactions in heaven. For Satan had been there, accusing Job, and the Lord had been boasting of him; and the Lord had licensed Satan to go against Job, with a

quiver full of arrows, but had appointed him his measure and rule.

And this is very comforting. For many a child of God is troubled, in the day of affliction, with the thought that his trial is commonplace, and no witness at all that he is not "as other men." But such trouble is mistaken. In the shape or material of the affliction, the believer may be just in company with other men, it is true. The same storm on the distant sea, or the same disease at home, may have bereaved them alike; but faith takes account of the relationship with God, and of the interest which all that concerns a poor saint awakens in heaven.

In the wisdom of God, in the construction of this beautiful story (true as I know it to be in every incident that it records), it is made to introduce all the great actors in the divine mystery, and to reveal the great truths which form the common faith of the elect.

This is much to be prized; for this declares the perfect harmony of all, even the most distant and independent, portions of the oracles of God. Accordingly, we see engaged in the action of this Book the *angels* who minister to the divine pleasure; *Satan* the great adversary; *the elect sinner* whose faith is cast into the furnace; *his brethren* in the faith; *the minister of God* in the energy of the Holy Ghost; and *the Lord God Himself.*

These are the actors in the wondrous scenery of this Book; so that while the action itself is simply the trial of a saint, it is so constructed as to bring forth all these great agents and energies, the very same with which our souls are conversant to this hour, occupied, also, in the ways and places which the whole of Scripture assigns to them. And it is a matter of the richest interest to our souls to trace this.

Thus the angels or "sons of God" are here seen for a moment or two, but exactly in the place and action which the general consent of all Scripture gives them. They are in attendance on the Lord in heaven, as those who had been forth, and were ready again to go forth, in the service of His good pleasure. For the whole Word thus bears witness to them. They are "ministering spirits," "ministers of His that do His pleasure." They are His hosts on high, and the Lord Himself is among them. Gabriel stands in His presence. The Seraphim attend His throne, and they are winged, either to veil their faces and their feet before the divine majesty, or to fly, like the wind, to execute the divine commands. All this is told of the angels throughout Scripture, and here the heavens are opened for a moment, and all this is seen and heard.

So as to Satan. This Book is in strictest analogy with the whole volume. "Messengers of Satan" go forth from the presence of God, as well as Gabriel and the hosts. "Lying spirits" as well as "ministering spirits" take their journey and their commission from thence. He goes about, says an apostle, seeking whom he may devour; as here, he says of himself, that he had been up and down, and

to and fro, in the earth. Another apostle tells us, that he, with his principalities and powers, is in heavenly places; and here we find him among the sons of God, in the presence of God. And again; he desired to have all the apostles, that he might sift them as wheat, put them to the proof of what they were; and so here as to Job. Satan is elsewhere called "the accuser of the brethren," and here he is heard as such. He is the tormentor of this servant of God, as Scripture generally presents him; but, as Scripture also testifies, his action is under the limitations and sovereignty of God. Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, as He walked in the land of Israel, gave him his measure (Mark v.); and so Elohim from the throne does here, and the eye of the Seer and the voice of the Prophet assign him also exactly this place and action. 1 Kings xxii.; Zech. iii.[27]

These analogies are as strict and literal as they can be. And further--for it is edifying to trace this still--we find the patriarch in one school with the distant apostle of the Gentiles--so richly does one Spirit breathe through the whole volume. We are in the last chapters of 2 Corinthians, when reading the first chapters of the Book of Job! We have the "thorn in the flesh," "the messenger of Satan," in both Job and Paul.

Then, as to Job and his friends, or the elect one whose faith is cast into the furnace, and his brethren in the faith. A very principal part of this patriarchal story is made up, as we commonly know, of the controversies that arose between them. Bitter and heated they were, in something more than the ordinary measure. But such things are still, and have been in every age.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were friends and brethren indeed, though they proved to be but "miserable comforters." They came to Job when all had deserted him, children mocking him, young men pushing away his feet, his kinsfolk failing him, his inward friends forgetting him, his servants giving him no answer, and his wife refusing him, though he entreated for their children's sake. They were true-hearted friends, who said that they would go and comfort their afflicted brother. And they did go; and they sat with him in his place of ashes and potsherds for seven days.

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[27]The children of light should reckon upon the attempts of the powers of darkness against them. A sudden moment of conflict should not therefore surprise us. For we are set to be the scene or theatre of their defeat by Christ. "It is our illumination" that exposes us. That is its proper natural operation. The more we are in the light, I may say, the more exposed we are. It was Adam's creature-beauty, Job's memorial with God, and the Apostle's attachment to Christ, that laid them open to Satan.

But let me add, that a "messenger of Satan" may be sent forth from the presence of God upon either the *flesh* or the *heart* of man. An evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul, and a lying spirit came upon the prophets of Ahab. 1 Sam. xvi.; 1 Kings xxii. The Lord was beginning solemn acts of *judgment*, and, therefore, these messengers of Satan were sent forth upon the *heart* of those who were righteously under judgment. But other messengers of Satan reach only the *body* or *circumstances*, as in the case of Paul and of our patriarch. And this is *discipline* merely, and not judgment.

But they fell out by the way. *Sad* to tell it, but so it was; not *strange* to tell it, for so has it ever been, and so is it still. So early as the times of Abraham's herdmen and Lot's herdmen, this stands on record. Joseph had to say to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way." Moses knew the trial of the *camp* even beyond that of the *wilderness*, as he went from Egypt to the Jordan. It was of His own that Jesus in His day had to say, How long shall I be with you and suffer you? And Paul counted "the care of all the churches" the heaviest thing that came upon him.

Variety of temper, different measures of attainment, the quality of the light and the form of the kingdom in us, if I may so express it, will occasion collision and trial, even where there is nothing morally wrong. But from whatever cause it be, so is it still, and so has it been from the days of Job and his friends, that we form a great part of each other's trial. The Lord sits over it all, refining His silver and purifying His gold, but still so it is, that we help to heat each other's furnace for the trial of faith.

Nothing, perhaps, has been a more common source of this falling out by the way, than the holding of favourite religious opinions, or an undue, disproportioned estimation of certain doctrines or points of truth. And this was the case here. Job prized certain points of truth, and his friends had their favourites also. But each "knew but in part," and darkened the perfect counsels of God. And by reason of this, they fell out by the way. Job, sorely afflicted by stroke upon stroke, insisted on it, that God acted *arbitrarily*; and having a right to do as He pleased, did so. His friends would have it, that God dealt *retributively*, and that therefore His way with Job convicted Job of some unconfessed iniquity. Their doctrines also very much savoured of human thoughts; they were not refined from the lees of man's religiousness. They drew much from the traditions of the elders, and from their own experiences and observations. They accredited that false though favourite axiom in the morals of the world, that "honesty is the best policy." "Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" is the challenge which their religion published. "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is of one mind, and who can turn Him?" is the counsel of his heart. They insinuate that if all were told, nothing would be too bad for him; and he reproaches them, in the contempt and bitterness of a wounded spirit, and an insulted character. "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you."

Such was the strife of words, the bickering and debate, among them; as sad a sample of falling out by the way as has ever been known, I may say, among brethren.

Elihu, in whom was a "manifestation of the Spirit," at length enters the scene, bringing the light of God to make manifest these forms of darkness. He had listened to the discourses and controversies of these brethren, but, in modesty and

reserve, as became his years, in the presence of ancient men, he had hitherto held his peace. He waited till multitude of days, which should know wisdom, and speak of understanding, had delivered sentence of truth. But now he speaks. The stirrings of the Spirit constrain him. He is silent while it is a question between himself and them, but he durst not surrender the rights of the Spirit in him. He cannot respect any man's person now. In Job's day, God chose the weak thing, as He has done ever since. Elihu was but a youth. Timothy was the same. But the ancient men had failed. The stone of help lies in another stripling of Bethlehem. For, from beginning to end it must be known, that the good that is done upon the earth, He doeth Himself. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Eliphaz and his companions shall not have it to say, "We have found out wisdom;" for "God thrusteth him down, not man," said Elihu of Job.

Job was to be rebuked. He had argued the arbitrariness of the divine hand in dealing with man, and, accounting for his present sufferings in that way, he was so far "righteous in his own eyes." Elihu shows that this was not so; that all was the holy discipline of One who, knowing the end from the beginning, ever counsels the best for His people. Nor will he, like the others, draw either from himself, or from the elders or fathers. He will not, in the way of human religiousness, bow to any names or traditions, however venerated, but, led of the Spirit, press on in the path where the light of God shines.

Elihu will not join in laying to Job's charge what his conscience truthfully resisted. But he will tell Job that the thoughts of conscience are not to rule his judgment, or dictate his speeches; that he should rather have allowed the divine wisdom in all this sore discipline, than concluded on the divine arbitrariness in it, just because conscience was clear. He tells Job this should have been his word--"Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

"A mighty maze," philosophy will say, "but not without a plan." "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain," a Christian poet will say. And a true and beautiful thought that is. But inspired wisdom counsels and teaches thus--"Although thou sayest thou shalt not see Him, yet judgment is before Him; therefore trust thou in Him." Chapter xxxv. 14. For we are to know that purposes of wisdom and goodness rule every event, though another day has so to declare it. "Judgment" is ever "before Him," as Elihu says. And God is to be justified in the thoughts of His children now, as He will be in the face of heaven and earth by-and-by. Matt. xi. 19; Ps. li. 4; l. 4.

Such an one was Elihu. And it is a circumstance full of meaning and of moral beauty, that Job does not answer him, as he had the others. Elihu invited him to speak if he would. But he had a moral sense, a conscience in the Holy Ghost,

that witnessed to the authority with which this minister of the Spirit spake. Very precious this is. How often, how common, among the saints, is this! Yea, and even beyond their borders, at times, the like authority is felt. How often has the presence of a holy man controlled the ungodly. The multitudes in the villages of Israel, after this manner, owned the Lord at times. They "were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." And the want of this is painful. Have we not often, beloved, been grieved to see the heart and understanding of others unmoved by that which has come to our own souls with all the authority of truth, and in the freshness of the divine unction? But Job gives us not this pain. And a man very dear to the saints he is, as he was to the blessed Lord who was thus afflicting him. Elihu had spoken to him in the Spirit, and his soul bowed to the authority of his word. He could not treat Elihu as he had treated Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He may not be as yet humbled, but he cannot be angry; he may not as yet make confession, but he will not reply. The Spirit of God in the ministry of His servant had entered the scene, and Job will at least be silent.[28]

The Lord, however, is He that teacheth to profit. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but it is God that giveth the increase. And, in analogy with these truths, the action of this beautiful Book proceeds. The voice of God from the whirlwind makes the testimony of the gifted minister effectual to the conscience and heart of Job. In a series of challenges as to natural things, that voice, mighty and yet gracious, addresses him. It has been said, by those competent to entertain such inquiries, that nothing in the whole compass of language can equal, much less surpass, the inimitable grandeur and sublimity of this address. And we can all see that it does that which it belongs to divine power to do--the complainant is humbled. "I know that Thou canst do everything." He confesses to Him whose mighty hand could exalt him in due time, and, after he had suffered awhile, was well able to strengthen, settle, and stablish him. 1 Peter v.

It was not the lesson of a sinner which Job had to learn. He knew already the grace of God. It was the lesson of a saint he needed to be taught, or taught more perfectly. It is for this, therefore, that the Lord seats Himself in the whirlwind. Had Job then, and for the first time, to learn the lesson of a sinner, the Lord would rather have addressed him in "the still small voice," the tone which suits grace, and in which it seeks and delights to be heard. But Job was already a saved sinner. He knew already the *grace*, but had as yet to be taught the *rights*, of God. And therefore the voice from the whirlwind. For the saint has to count on such

[28]The knowledge of truth alone will never ensure happy or profitable ministry. If we draw merely from our stores or possessions of knowledge, we shall find ourselves confounded. The freshness of the Spirit in us, and the exercise of our gift under Him, at the time of ministry, are also needful.

apparent roughness as the sinner never gets. John was left in prison, when every sickness and disease among the people was attended to. The Lord, in His walks of mercy and of usefulness to all who needed Him, may often have passed near the prison doors, but He did not open them, as He could have done, though He was, all the while, giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. Was it that John was loved the less? No. Among them that were born of woman there was none like him. And was it that Job was loved the less, because he was addressed out of the whirlwind? No. There was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man. But already knowing the grace of God, he was now to learn and own His rights. And he does learn them, and confesses them. And he confesses them, and bows to them, before the pressure of the mighty hand was removed, and while as yet it was heavy upon him. That is much to be observed, much to be prized. For that is a beautiful witness, that Job had learnt the lesson indeed, learnt it spiritually, learnt it in the grace and energy of divine teaching. It is easy and common to own the good of a chastisement when it is over, and then to say, I would not have been without it. That is not above the reach of nature. But while the burthen is still borne, to vindicate and bless the hand that lays it on, that is something more. While as yet he lay in the place of ashes and potsherds, and sore boils tormented his body from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, Job said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

Such was the moral, and such the issue, of this simple but important action. A lesson had to be taught a child of God. Human wisdom, and religion too, sets itself to teach it, but betrays its own weakness and dishonour. A minister of the Spirit, in the light of the Lord, rebukes the thought of man, exposing the wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world, and applying the principles of the truth of God. And the power of Him who worketh all in all seals the instruction. Human and divine energies are thus displayed in the places and characters which belong to them, the one abased, and the other magnified.

Such are the actors in the scene of this wondrous Book--angels, Satan, the tried saint, and his brethren, the minister of God in the energy of the Spirit, and the Lord Himself. They hold the place, and do the deeds, which, as we have now seen, all Scripture assigns them respectively.

This Book, as I observed before, is an independent Book. The most so, I may add, of any in the inspired volume. In the progress of revelation it intimates nothing before it, nor does any other part of that revelation find it necessary to it. Job's history is not linked with that of the people of God, nor does it advance, in

any way, the manifestation of the purposes of God. But stranger and foreigner as it is, it speaks exactly the same language. The same Spirit breathes here, the same light shines here. And this is so, not only in the case of those who are introduced as actors in the scenes, but also in the truths and doctrines assumed or asserted. The corruption of nature as found in the seed of Adam--the value of a sacrifice as a propitiation with God--a coming day of judgment--resurrection and life--these are among the common thoughts here. But more beautiful and striking than all is the knowledge it takes of *the person and duty of the Kinsman*, a mystery well known in Scripture, and, throughout Scripture, largely though silently referred to, when too commonly not perceived--a mystery which shadows all the great truths that are characteristic of the work of our redemption.

This subject is too great to be fully considered here, even had I the grace and light to do so. But it is so happy a one, and suggested by our Patriarch's well-known confession of his faith, that I cannot altogether pass it by.

Our apostle says, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." A necessary way of nature is here assumed, and assumed with approval, by the Spirit of God. That regard to one's self which each one of us is ready enough to render, is divinely sanctioned. And then, on this very principle of nature, the apostle goes on to put the Lord's nurture of the Church. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord the Church*; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Christ is declared to act towards us on this instinctive verdict of nature, that a man is to love his own body. The Holy Ghost, through the apostle, would let our hearts embrace this joy, that the force of this first law of nature is felt by Christ towards us, and the duty it imposes is owned by Him. So that if I can understand my love for myself, I may understand Christ's love to me. The duty I owe myself is acknowledged by my Lord as due by Him to me. He can but nourish and cherish me, as I would nourish and cherish myself.

Can any thought, I ask, respecting the place into which the love of the Son of God has brought Him surpass this? Can the imagination form the idea of a more intense and devoted affection? Impossible. If it could, Christ would embody it, and His Spirit would reveal it, for His love "passeth knowledge." But it cannot.

But though this may be the most marvellous expression of this love, yet there is another of the same character. There is another duty owed on the like claims of nature, which in like manner has been adopted and acknowledged by the Lord--the duty of kindred or natural relations.

The Lord, the Son of God, became our Kinsman. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." And He became this Kinsman that He might do for the children the duties and services of a Kinsman. And what these duties are, and how the Lord

has answered and discharged them, we are told in Scripture.

One principal duty was, to ransom a brother or his inheritance, if such or either had been sold.

Now such a sold or forfeited condition is ours by nature, under the ruins of Adam. Forfeiture of every thing is the simple idea that holds our natural condition in the just light. We have forfeited life, and with it all things, by the breach of those terms on which we held life, and with it all things. We have incurred the debt of death. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Adam did eat, and this law demanded death. We sold ourselves under that sentence, and to that penalty, and were debtors to die the death. But our Kinsman has paid the price. Jesus died. He has counted out the money to the uttermost farthing. In the language of the law, eye has gone for eye, life for life, blood for blood. We have not been redeemed by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ. The value of that blood was well tried. The blood of bulls and of goats was not rich enough. It would not do, it could not do. But "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," tells us that He was satisfied who exacted, and could not but exact, the full ransom or redemption-price. And now *we and our inheritance stand repurchased by our Kinsman.*

This is the very principal in the great services of Christ for us. It is largely noticed and foreshadowed by the law (Lev. xxv.), but it was understood from the beginning. For sacrifice or vicarious offering proceeded on this principle. And that was made known upon the entrance of sin, or act of forfeiture. The coat of skin which covered Adam bore witness that he stood in the value of a ransom, that the virtue of One who had met the demand of God against him was now upon him.

But this is full of blessing--that the great mystery of the Kinsman or Redeemer was known (published by the Lord, and believed by the sinner) ere the law had shadowed it, or prophets proclaimed it.[29]

Another of these duties was this--to rescue or deliver a brother taken captive.

In the previous case of ransom or repurchase, the Kinsman had to deal with a rightful claimant, and to answer his demands. His brother or his brother's inheritance had been sold, and had to be repurchased at a price well and justly ascertained, according to the law of estimations. But this duty of rescuing or delivering a brother is different. Here the Kinsman has to do with a stranger or a foe; and by counterforce, or the strength of a stronger arm, to perform this service.

[29]The same Hebrew word signifies kinsman, redeemer, and avenger.

But this, also, is our natural condition, our state under the ruins of the fall. And this character of Kinsman-service, the Son of God, partaker of our flesh and blood, renders us.

In this, however, His dealing is with our enemy. In the previous case of repurchase He dealt with God, answering His righteous demands for us: here, He answers the enemy for us. For while it is true that we had, through disobedience, incurred the debt of death, the forfeiture of life and all things, so as to need a ransom, it is also true that we had suffered wrong at the hand of the Serpent, out of the results of which, in bondage or captivity to the powers of darkness and corruption, our Redeemer or Kinsman delivers us.

It was in this action that the Lord, in the days of His flesh, went through the cities and villages of Israel. As the stronger man He had then entered the strong man's house, spoiling his goods, and unloosing his prisoners. And He will finish such work, and perfect His way as the Kinsman-deliverer, when He, as the plague of death and hell's destruction, rescues His sleeping saints. Then will take place the *redemption* of the *purchased* possession. See Eph. i. 14.

And again I may say, Happy is it to know that this way of Christ, this work of our great Kinsman, was also known in patriarchal days. When Abraham heard that *his brother* was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, and brought again his brother Lot and his goods. Genesis xiv. Five kings may fight with four in the vale of Siddim, the potsherds of the earth may strive with their fellows; all this, in one sense, is no concern of the heavenly stranger, though his tent may be pitched in the neighbourhood. But the way of Christ, which becomes the principle of conduct to His people, is everything to him--and that way must have been then known, the service of the Kinsman-deliverer must have been then quite understood among the elect household, for as soon as Abraham hears of Lot, he is all action in a moment, and goes forth for the rescue of his captured brother.

A kindred duty with this was, to avenge the blood of a murdered brother, or relative.

This duty was recognized by the law, and kept in memory all through the times of the nation. The ordinance touching the cities of refuge was a relief against the abuse of it; and the famous parable of the woman of Tekoah assumed the fact, that the whole system in Israel took knowledge of it.

But, like the others, it was older than the law and the prophets. Notices of Christ and His ways and His doings for us were the earliest manifestations of the mind of God. Happy for our hearts to know this! And, accordingly, this Kinsman-duty had been prescribed in very early days. When the sword was committed to Noah, it was published. "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But it was understood as a divine principle even before then. Cain trembled before

this law, which, as his words intimate, must have then been known everywhere. Genesis iv. 14. It was, indeed, a part of the very first promise. "It shall bruise thy head" announced it. For that sentence told the Serpent, that man's Kinsman, the Woman's Seed, would avenge on him the wrongs done by him upon the family. And this duty Christ will perform when He casts the old Serpent, "which is the Devil and Satan," with death and hell, into the lake of fire.[30]

Such are among the duties which a Kinsman, according to the mind and reckoning of the Lord, owed, and such is the glorious performance of them by our great Kinsman. And wondrous is it to be entitled thus to write of Him! wondrous that the necessary and instinctive dictates of nature are suggested by the Holy Ghost as the ground, warrant, and character of the love of Christ to the Saints! that, as I said before, whatever nature tells me I owe myself, that Christ tells me He owes me; and now, I may add, whatever nature tells me my kindred owe me, that also Christ tells me He owes me. And again I ask, Can any thought respecting the place into which the love of the Son of God has brought Him, surpass this? Can the imagination form the idea of a more intense and devoted affection?

The Son of God became our Kinsman for the very end of performing all these Kinsman-services for us. Hebrews ii., I believe, tells us that. And these duties and services embody all the great materials in the mystery of redemption. And, as we have now seen, they have been made known from the beginning. Jesus did not wait till the Law presented Him, in its shadows or swaddling-clothes, to the faith and joy of poor sinners. The Law afterwards gave the things concerning Him a tabernacle, but those things had been made known from the beginning. The fourth day, in the course of creation, brought forth the Sun, which then became the tabernacle of the light, but the light had been abroad through the scene, the light had been shining, from the earliest moment of the first day. Jesus was known in the garden of Eden, and borne on the breath of the very first promise. And cheering this is to our spirits--happy to track these notices of the common faith, these thoughts and truths of God and His covenant, all along the line of the ages, linking the most distant hearts of the elect in the fellowship of one joy, and giving them one song for ever and ever.

Among the saints of the earlier days, our Job knew Him in this great character of Kinsman or Redeemer. As rescuing him from the power of death, or from captivity to the grave and corruption, Job celebrates Him. It is a scripture well

[30]The Kinsman *delivering* and the Kinsman *avenging* deals with an enemy or a wrong-doer, and not, as in the case of *repurchasing*, with a righteous claimant. There is, however, this difference: in the case of delivering, the Kinsman only rescues his brother or relative out of the hand of the enemy; in the case of avenging, he visits the blood of his brother or relative upon the head of the enemy. Christ will deliver us from the hand of death at the *beginning* of the Kingdom (1 Corinthians xv. 54), He will avenge us upon the head of death at the *close* of the Kingdom. 1 Corinthians xv. 26.

known, and much delighted in by the saints. And well may it be so. All that ushers it forth to our hearing, and all that sustains and accompanies it while we listen to it, give it an uncommon character.

"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

What an apprehension of Christ in both His person and His work is here! It is the faith and hope of our Gospel. Job knew he had a Redeemer, a Redeemer then living, and thereafter to stand upon the earth manifested in flesh, and that this Redeemer would achieve for him a glorious victory over the power of death, and strength of corruption. And all this fine apprehension of Christ is accompanied with the simplest appropriating faith. "Whom I shall see for myself," says Job, "and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." This is the confidence of Paul. This is the liberty that is befitting the full revelation of the grace of God. Paul and Job, in like spirit, knew the glorious redemption, and knew it for themselves. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

And what fervency is this with which the Holy Ghost enables the patriarch to set his seal to all this precious confession of his faith! Job would have all men know, and every generation of them, he would publish it far and wide, he would tell it out without a fear that he should ever have to cancel a letter of it, he would engrave it for eternity and have it leaded in the rock, that he knew his Redeemer!

What "light of the Lord" was this in which the Patriarch walked! "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Job walked there long before the house of Jacob, or the prophets of Israel, knew of it. The light was abroad, and the Spirit led the elect into it, from the beginning. And this occasion, recorded in the 19th chapter, was a moment when that light beamed brightly in Job's soul. His face did not then, like Stephen's, shine as an angel's in the presence of his accusers. He had not, in that way, put on the garments of a child of resurrection, but his spirit within was in the regions and liberty and triumph of such a one.

This visitation, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, drawing forth this blessed utterance from the heart of the patriarch, was the bow in the cloud for a moment. It shared the path of Job's spirit with the grief and heaviness that it knew so well--as Jeremiah's vision by night, and the Mount of Transfiguration, broke the dreary way of the weeping prophet, and of the adorable "Man of sorrows." Jer. xxxi. 26; Matt. xvii. 2. It was the Spirit's power. The poor sufferer was made to look away from God's dealings *with* him to His doings *for* him. For there is a differ-

ence. The one calls the soul into exercise, and often are too unwieldy, beyond the management of our hearts. Very generally they need an interpreter. The other takes the soul into entire liberty. They are so plain that a child may read them. They bear their own meaning on their forehead. They need no interpreter. God's providences, or His dealings *with* us, are ofttimes perplexing, as well as tenderly afflicting. God's grace in the Gospel, or His doings for us, are such as cannot either puzzle the thoughts or grieve the heart. They bear their own witness, and tell a tale of devoted, everlasting love, such as it is impossible to mistake.

And these are the things we have to do with, every day. If we be oppressed or fatigued by the current course of circumstances, finding them weighty, dark, and intricate, it is our privilege, and our duty too, to pass over, in spirit and in thought, to that calm and sunny atmosphere in which the Gospel, or God's doings for us, ever invest the soul.

All this may be seen in Job. That loved and honoured saint is generally seen grappling with God's dealings with him. The hand of God had gone out upon all his interests and enjoyments. Loss of fortune, children, and health, had come, by sore surprise, upon him, and he persists, in the heat and resentment of nature, to keep all this before his mind. But in a moment of the Spirit's power he is made to look away from all this, to turn from God's dealings *with* him to God's doings *for* him; and then he triumphs. Then he can contemplate more than the boils on his body, even the worms destroying it; but all is light and triumph. Then, in the face of all enemies, he can sit and sing in spirit, If God be for me, who can be against me? Romans viii.

Truly blessed is this. The tempter would lead us to judge of God by the dark shadings of many a passage of our history here. But the Spirit would have us acquaint ourselves with Him in the beauteous light of the Gospel, the glory that shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and there is light there and no darkness at all--no shadows which have to be chased away, no dimness that needs to be interpreted.

But this rather by the way--I have already traced certain combinations between this earliest and most independent portion of the book of God and all other parts of it, whether near or distant. And very establishing to the heart this is. But such combinations or harmonies may be traced still further--in the *scenes of action*, as well as in the *actors in the scenes*.

There are "heaven" and "earth" here, as in all Scripture; each, too, having its "day" or special occasion. See i. 4, 6, 13; ii. 1. There are also "this present evil world," and "the world to come." At the opening of the action the scene is laid in this present evil world. It is but domestic, but all the features of the great world are seen in it. For each family circle, like every heart, is a little world. Indulgence and the love of enjoyment appear in the children, and something of the common "enmity against God" in the wife of our patriarch. Then, again, there are *natural*

calamities, as from wind and fire and disease; and there are *relative* calamities, as from the hand of our neighbour or fellow-men, as Sabeans and Chaldeans. And all this is the various casualty of life and human circumstance to this hour. There is stroke upon stroke, messenger after messenger, turning over every page of the history. It is but human life *then* instead of *now*, but the same life in its losses, crosses, and sore contradictions. There is a little reality, a little of the "friend in need" who "is a friend indeed," but there is a great deal of scorn and desertion in the hour of calamity, still so well known in the world. Job has three friends who sit with him among his ashes and potsherds, but all beside see him afar off.

Is not all this "the present evil world" drawn to the life?

But at the close of the action, the scene is laid in "the world to come," God's world and not man's, the world which His energies are to form, and His principles are to fill. It is the time of refreshing and restitution. In the 42nd chapter of our Book, we are, in spirit, in the Millennium. The Holy Ghost gives us this account of it. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord," are the words which introduce His allusion to "the patience of Job," and to "the end of the Lord." The husbandman toils in hope, and gets his fruit in harvest, or in resurrection. And so did Job endure, till, at last, he that sowed reaped. The 42nd chapter is the harvest of the husbandman. James v. 7-11.

And happy, I may say, is this further witness to the value which a spirit of confession and repentance has with our God, beloved. As it is written, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;" and again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins." For I doubt not, that it was to Job's few words of confession and repentance that the Lord referred when He turned to the friends and told them, that they had not spoken of Him the thing that was right, like His servant Job. They had not made confession at the end, as he had done. And let us cherish this assurance. There are comfort and strength in it. The language of repentance prevails. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," says Jehovah--and then came the divine compassion: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." Or, as we may learn from Hosea, words of confession and repentance from Israel, in the latter day, mightily prevail with God. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely," is the divine answer, with a rich and beautiful chapter of promises.

The consolation of this! the tale it tells us of grace, unwearied, long-suffering grace! And accordingly Job flourishes again. The Lord is as the dew to him. He grows as the lily, his branches spread, his beauty is as the olive tree, his scent as Lebanon. In "the end of the Lord" he is seen as "in the regeneration,"

or day of the kingdom, and even others dwell under his shadow, reviving as the corn, and growing as the vine. See Hosea xiv.[31]

Such was our Patriarch in "the end of the Lord." Another witness he is that the burning bush is never consumed, because of the good-will of Him who dwells in it. It may be Israel in Egypt, or in Babylon, the children in the furnace, or the prophet in the den. It may be a poor elect Gadarene, beset with a legion, or the patriarch, the sport of wind and fire and bodily disease, of Chaldeans and Sabeans too, the power and messengers of Satan let out upon him, still the burning bush is unconsumed for the goodwill of Him who dwells in it. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves," says the apostle, as speaking in the name of them all, "that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead."

Such an one was our Patriarch. And such an one he had learnt himself to be. In the school of God he had now learnt his calling, as in the experience of his own soul. But a great lesson it is. A great difference, I am full sure, between having God in the midst of our circumstances, and God as Himself the first and great circumstance. The first was Job's way at the beginning. He would not have been without God. He owned Him, and gave Him an altar in the family scene. But he had not said to Him, Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us. He had not, as Abram did afterward, *come out from circumstances with God*, trusting Him to surround him with His own circumstances. The power to do this cries, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." For such was the utterance of a saint when his soul had come forth from the tempest and temptation of seeing himself second to the wicked in the conditions and circumstances of life here. Ps. lxxiii.

What a voice this truth has for us! Some may listen to it for *comfort*, others of us of feebler faith for *warning*. The world and pride and selfishness form the

[31] I do not regard Job so much as a *type*, but rather as a *sample*. His calling was the common calling, as a dead and risen man. Every saint, now gathering for heavenly glory, is such. Israel in the latter day will be as such, and the whole system of the millennial age. The Lord Jesus holds all things, and exercises His offices, as the One that was dead and is alive again. But I judge it to be more fitting to speak of Job as a sample of the common calling, than as a type. I could not, however, object to the expression, were it used by others.

Job learnt his lesson through sufferings. The Lord, I may say, did the same. Hebrews ii. iv. v. He was made perfect for His high functions in that way. Christ's compassions could not have been *priestly*, till He became a man, partaker of the flesh and blood of the children, and suffered as such. And Job's history may be read as the expression or foreshadowing of all this.

So Israel. They will be as a people who, having destroyed themselves, have found their help in God. Hosea presents them in that character. Their language in chapter xiv. is the language of such a people. And Job's history may be regarded as the expression or foreshadowing of this also. He revives, he grows again as the lily, and his branches spread, at the end, as Israel and Israel's branches will, according to their prophet. So that we may speak of Job as a type. But I still feel and judge it to be more fitting, to present him as a sample of us all, in the common faith, as dead and risen with Christ.

circumstances out of which the call of God summons us; and religion, in a sense, may have brought God into them; but faith, in its simplicity, forms the other, and God has not to be brought into them, for He is there from the beginning, the great Framer or Artificer of them all.

One repeats this truth, for it is, as I judge, the great secret of this Book. Our Job at the end learnt the power of the call of God. And this, I may say, imparts a just and spiritual bearing to all he now does, as well as invests his whole estate with the beauty and stability of millennial days.

He was, at the beginning, as a *prophet*, *priest*, and *king*, and so is he again, at the end. But he is so after a new order, exercising his different functions more according to the mind of God. As a *prophet*, he had, at the beginning, too confidently assumed to be the interpreter of God and His ways; but now he says, "I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me." He will be a disciple of the Lord, ere he teach others; he will have his ear opened, ere his tongue be loosed. Isa. 50. 4. Such is the purifying of his prophetic ministry. He will know nothing, save as he learns it from God. His doctrine is not *his* now. As a *priest*, at the beginning, he had stepped in between God and his children, to heal probable or dreaded breaches. But he does not seem to wash his own clothes, while sprinkling the purifying water on others. Num. xix. 21. He wanted to remember that he himself was also in the body, temptable like the weakest. Gal. vi. 1. But now he is *accepted* himself. Job xlii. 9; Ezek. xiv. 14, 20. As a *king*, his honours now come after his afflictions, his glories after his sufferings; and also after he prayed for his friends, is his captivity turned. He exercises grace, ere he is again entrusted with power--all this being according to the great originals. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me."

In these ways, he is prophet, priest, and king, *after a new order*, and all is refined in the furnace, like gold tried in the fire.

And he is the father of a family again, a family also, as I may again say, of a new order--nothing has to be corrected among them, but all is in happy, holy fellowship, the heart of the father turned to the children, and the heart of the children to their father. At the beginning he had to watch their ways, and provide for the evil they might have committed. But at the end there is nothing of this; their father has only to see them with admiration and delight. They awakened *fear* at first, but now *contentment*.

And further, in this beautiful millennial or resurrection scene, which thus closes this story, the stormy wind is hushed, and the lightning of the thunder strikes no more. In this day of a second Noah, such as Job was (the lord of a new world), the waters which once "prevailed" are now "assuaged." And the Chaldeans and Sabeans no longer spoil the spoil, and prey the prey. There is "no adversary

nor evil occurrent," no "Canaanite in the house of the Lord" now. Nothing hurts or destroys in all the holy mountain. The Lord delivers His people from those who served themselves of them.

All this is pledged and pictured for us here. And what may be said to be of still deeper value to us, the great enemy himself, the ready and wishful agent of all the mischief and sorrow that had come in, is gone likewise. At the beginning he is in the action, exercising himself as an accuser in heaven, and as a tormentor on earth. And it is for the comfort of the tried saint, that the hand of both God and the enemy are engaged in his trial; the enemy (as here with our patriarch) seeking to cast his crown to the ground, and to cast his fair memorial with God in the dust, the Lord purposing (and performing it) to brighten that crown, and still further to bless the heir of those dignities and joys. It is a comfort to the saint, in the day of trial, to remember this. But, at the end, the enemy is gone. The purpose, in the wisdom of God, for which he had been used, is answered, and he is gone. The discipline of Job had ceased as in his destruction.

Satan had understood Job. He knew the workings of that corrupt nature, which his own lie had formed in the garden of Eden. He had said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him?... Touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.... Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." And serious and terrible is the thought, beloved, that he knows us so thoroughly, and understands the springs of thought and will within us. But though he thus understands *Job*, he did not understand *God*. The counsels of grace are above him. And by reason of this, he has been always, in the history of this world, defeating himself, while thinking that he was getting advantage of us; for he has to meet God in the very thing he does, and the purposes he plans, against us. When he interfered with Adam in the garden, he encountered God to his confusion, and the promise to Adam announced his own doom. When he provoked David to number the people, Ornan's threshing-floor was disclosed, and the spot where mercy rejoiced against judgment becomes the place of the temple. When he sifted the Apostles as wheat, he was answered by the prayer of Jesus, and, instead of faith failing, brethren were strengthened. And, above all, when he touched Jesus on the cross, the very death he inflicted was his own perfect and accomplished ruin. So, in every trouble which he brings on any of us, he finds, or is to find, sooner or later, that he has met the mighty God, and not the feeble saint. He entered Job's nest that he might spoil it, and leave it driven and wasted. He came into another garden then. But God was there as well as his servant Job, and in the end Satan is confounded.

Thus is it with the saints and their enemy. They shall take the kingdom, and in the kingdom Satan shall have no place. Out of the trials which he had raised around them and against them, they come forth to wear their crowns, and sing

their songs. And, instead of his appearing again "among the sons of God," the mighty angel shall lay hold on him, and cast him into the bottomless pit.[32]

This is full of blessing--and this is millennial blessing, shadowed here in this beautiful story. But there is more. There will be no question in the millennial heavens about the saints, as there was about Adam in the garden, and about Job in the beginning of this Book. The tree of knowledge tested the creature whom God had just made. But in the age of the resurrection, in the heavens where Job and all the children of the resurrection will be, there will be no such test. There will be no question about man. There will be silence in heaven as to man, for the great Kinsman has answered all questions, and man is glorified there.

Such are the changes which have arisen, ere we leave this divine, inspired story. Has not the *trial* of faith been *precious*, as St. Peter speaks, when we can talk of such changes? The enemy is gone. His ministers, or messengers, the wind and the fire, the Chaldeans and Sabeans, take their commission no more. Job, too, has changed his mind, and made his confession to God--his friends have changed their mind, and humbled themselves to him. But there is One who abides the same. He has no step to retrace, no word to recall, no deed of His hand, or counsel of His heart, to alter or repent of. Other scriptures tell of Him, that He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and that with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And this precious tale about Him and His doings so illustrates and exhibits Him.

There is never entire calmness, or the absence of all haste and distraction, where we are not conscious that our *strength is equal to our business*, whatever it may be. Nor is there, when we are not equally conscious of *integrity or righteousness in that business.* The consciousness of both righteousness and strength is needed in order to fit the hand to do a deed, or the foot to take a step, with entire ease.

Now we know that this ease marks all the ways and operations of God. He is ever at work (to speak after the manner of men) in the full possession of this undistractedness of which we are speaking. We might judge this from the neces-

[32]It has been observed by another, that Satan is *always* defeated. This thought seems to get the most striking confirmations from Scripture, beyond the cases mentioned above.

He is the instrument, the willing instrument, of destroying the flesh; but that destruction ends in *the saving of the spirit.* 1 Cor. v. 5. He receives, gladly receives, one that is judicially delivered over to him; but all that ends in *such an one learning not to blaspheme.* 1 Tim. i. 20. He sends forth his messengers as thorns in the flesh, delighting to do so, as being bent on mischief, having been "a murderer from the beginning;" but this still works good, for *the servant of Christ is thereby kept from undue exaltation.* 2 Cor. xii. 7.

These are illustrious exhibitions of the devil being *always* defeated. Because they show this--that he lends himself directly to his own overthrow. His own weapon is turned against himself. The one whom he assails is, by the very assault, given strength or virtue against him.

Happy assurance! our great adversary is never victorious! It is the pricks he kicks against.

sary glory of His godhead. But the ways of Jesus on earth always exhibited this, and He, as we know, was God manifest in the flesh. And this ease and calmness, in which all the operations of God proceed, tell us, that though they may to us appear strange and even wilful, as Job thought them, yet is He able to interpret them every one, so as to be justified in His sayings, and clear when He is judged. And this is happy. "The bud may have a bitter taste," and "blind unbelief is sure to err." These things are so. But "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." We know how our Job was tried--deeply, variously, and, as might be thought, wantonly, needlessly; for he walked in the fear of God, and in the service of his generation. But "the end of the Lord" is more than vindication. It is display. The trial is found to be unto praise and honour and glory. The light of the coming day, rebuke what it may, will have only to set off and reflect the excellency of Him with whom we have to do.

Thus have we lingered, for a little, over these bright notices of millennial days, "the days of heaven upon earth," which shine at the close of this lovely as well as serious and instructive tale of patriarchal times. But there is more.

At the beginning, Job held all his blessings with reserve and suspicion. He was not in safety, nor at rest, nor in quiet; yet trouble came. "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me," says he, "and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." It must needs be so. The instability with which departure from God has affected every possession and every profit here makes this necessary. But, at the end, there are no "fears within," any more than Chaldeans or "fightings without." No shadow crosses the settled sunshine that rests on all around him, or the calm light which fills all within.

And further--his kinsfolk and acquaintance, at the end, seek him again. They ought, indeed, never to have deserted him. For we deceive ourselves if we think that we must be right if we *grieve* those whom God is *disciplining*. This is often very far indeed from being the case. The Lord said in Zechariah, "I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." So also is Isaiah xlvii. 6--and so Obadiah 10-14, to the same effect. We are more commonly, perhaps, in God's mind, and act as the living vessels of the Spirit, when *soothing* such. And sure I am it was so in Job's case. Had his former friends known God's way, they would have dealt very differently with him. They would not have left him. The very fact that "the hand of God" had touched him, as he so deeply expresses it, would have been the occasion of "pity," as he further says, from his friends.

However, as part of the bright sunshine that gladdens his estate at the end, his kinsfolk and acquaintance again seek him. And they do so to *congratulate* as well as to *compassionate* him. And if they talk to him of past griefs, it is but to heighten his present joy--as Israel afterwards, in their triumphant feast

of Tabernacles, might make booths and sit under them, in grateful remembrance of wilderness-days.

All these are happy reverses, and the latter end of our patriarch is twice as good as his beginning. But among all the gladdening anticipations which shine in the latter page of this history there is none which more captivates the heart than *the reconciliation.* The patriarch and his brethren, as the narrative largely tells us, and as we well know, had sadly fallen out by the way, as they walked along the high road of "this present evil world;" but as soon as they enter "the age to come," the strife of tongues and stir of war are heard and seen no more.

This is truly welcome to the heart. For what joy will it be to be delivered of selfishness and pride, and many other workings of an ungenerous and perverted nature. How are the pleasures of the heart spoiled by such robbers continually! What a thing a page of history is! What a record of the agitations of envy and ambition and revenge! Is it not misery thus to see men "hateful, and hating one another," and then to remember that we are still alive and active in the midst of the same elements? But another thing is in our prospect; and it is the way of the wisdom and grace of God again and again, in the progress of His Word, as here in the 42nd chapter of Job, to give us a mystic picture of it. Then man, as *deceived by Satan*, shall give place; and man, as *anointed by God*, shall prevail. Then shall be known the joy of getting out of such darkness into such light, of beholding the Sun again, after centuries of midnight gloom.

We know from Scripture that great physical virtue will attend this coming kingdom. As prophets sing, the wilderness "shall rejoice and blossom as the rose"--the lame shall leap as the hart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing, the cow and the bear shall feed together, and the wolf shall lie down with the kid. Nature in all its order shall own the presence of the Lord. The floods shall clap their hands, the trees of the wood shall rejoice, before Him. As creation has already felt the bondage of corruption, it shall then feel the liberty of glory.

It will be as though dormant sensibilities had all been suddenly awakened. It will be as the sweeping of an exquisite instrument with a master hand. It will be the *same* creation, but under new authority, new influences. Let but the sons of God be manifested, and the whole system shall spring into new conditions and consciousness.

And so *man*, when the powers of that coming age take him up as their subject. Let but the passage be made from this present evil world into the world to come, and new principles will at once gild and furnish the scene, and give *moral* enjoyments (which are the richest of all) to all personal and social life.

This will be the touching of an instrument of still finer workmanship. The system around the vegetable and animal world is susceptible of such forms of beauty and of order as may make it all the vivid, happy reflection of divine good-

ness and wisdom; but in the renewed mind of man there lie latent powers and affections of nothing less than the divinest texture. In its present condition it has to struggle with nature, and to suffer sore let and hindrance from the flesh. It is oppressed and encumbered by a gross atmosphere. But it has capabilities of acting, judging, and feeling of the highest order. And let but the due influences reach it in power, those sensibilities and faculties will be all awakened, and forms of moral beauty throughout all personal and social life will show themselves. What a hope for the spirit tried in conflict with the flesh! It will be the same "new creature" that now is: only in other conditions. Not oppressed and clouded, but, as it were, breathing its native air.

Scripture gives us many a witness of such moral virtue and enjoyment in the millennial age. It is one of the most delightful occupations of the mind of Christ in us, to hear these witnesses, in their mystic language, deliver their testimony.

The Father of Israel and the Gentiles are seen together, for a moment, in Genesis xxi. And their communion was a sample of the holy, happy intercourse of Israel and the nations, in the coming days of the kingdom. Questions which before had divided and disturbed them are now all settled. The well of water, which had been the occasion of strife, is now a witness of the oath or covenant. All pure social affections adorn this communion of Abraham and Abimelech; and they part under pledged and plighted friendship. Abraham's grove, in principle, makes the desert to bloom, and his altar makes the earth a sanctuary; but his way with Abimelech, and Abimelech's with him, give that bright moment its dearest and highest character. For there are no enjoyments like *moral* enjoyments, no pleasures like those of the *heart*.

So in Exodus xviii. The heavenly and the earthly families are seen together, under the type of Jethro and the ransomed tribes, at the mount of God. And all is full of moral beauty. And yet the materials which make up the scene had been, in other and earlier days, very differently minded towards each other. Moses and Zipporah had parted in anger, the last time they had met, and the congregation had been murmuring again and again. But now the mount of God has influences for them, and from the highest to the least, from Jethro down to the most distant parts of the camp, all is in the power of godly order, subjection, and fellowship.

Then again, that generation that lived in the closing days of David and in the early days of Solomon exhibit the same. They had been numbering each other to the sword, in the wood of Ephraim, but the sword is turned into a ploughshare now. The days of Solomon were, typically or in spirit, millennial days, and sweet and surprising virtue attends them. Instead of going forth again to the field of battle, they sit, every man with his neighbour, under the vine and under the fig-tree. "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry."

Are not these *moral* transfigurations? And how blessed they are! Pass but the border. Leave man's day for the Lord's day. Breathe the air of the Mount of God--and all this moral renovation, with its countless springs and streams of social felicity, shall be tasted, ever fresh and ever pure. 'Tis but a little while and all this shall be. The *same* brethren, who may now be a trial to one another, like our Job and his friends, shall then heighten and enlarge each other's joy. And in the earthly places, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." Pride and selfishness shall have ceased to depreciate, as they do now, with all their companion lusts and wickednesses, the pleasures of the heart.

This patriarchal story, on which we have now been meditating, more ancient than, and as illustrious as, any of these inspired records, gives us a like sample of millennial days. Job and his three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, are the same Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, the same *persons*. And they are no longer contending, but united brethren. They have ascended the mount at the end; and there lies all the difference. And barren indeed our hearts must be of every gracious affection, and dead to all godly emotions, if we hail not such a prospect.

He who by His blood did long ago break down all partition walls, and who is now, by His Spirit, giving believers common access to the Father, will by-and-by, with His own hand, join the stick of Ephraim and the stick of Judah, and make them one there. Ezekiel xxxvii. 16. His Israel on the earth shall see "eye to eye," for the light and the joy of Zion's salvation shall be passed, with holy speed, from the messengers on the mountains to the watchmen of the city, and from them to the people, and from the people to the nations (Isaiah lii. 7-9)--and, among the heavenly people, the children of the resurrection, like Job and his friends, "that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come."

THE CANTICLES.

"Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee."

This was the devout breathing of the king of Israel (the penman, too, of this little book to which we are now proposing, in the Lord's grace, to introduce ourselves), when the glory had come to fill the house which he had builded.

But so it was. The Son of God, Jehovah's Fellow, He that was with God and

was God, was manifest in flesh, and conversed with us here. He dwelt with men on the earth. He tabernacled among us. He was Jesus. We knew Him as such. He was a *Man*, and a Friend, and a Master, and a Companion. He invited confidence. He sought sympathy and imparted it. And, as a *Man*, we know Him still--as truly a Man amid the brightest glories of heaven now, as once He was a Man amid the ruins and sorrows of earth--as able, through sympathy, to understand the sufferings of His saints still, as when He walked the streets and highways here, bearing our griefs and carrying our sicknesses.

And what will He be even for ever? Still *Jesus Christ.* Dominion of all things will be His as a *Man.* The scene may change the second time, from the present temple in heaven to the kingdom of glory, as at first it changed from the cities and villages here to the temple on high, but it is "the *Man* Christ Jesus" who passes from scene to scene. Precious mystery! Manhood having been once taken up, will never be given up. A temple has been found for the glory, a vessel for the blessing, a person for the manifestation, an instrument for the exercise of power and government, suited to the counsels of divine wisdom and to the purposes of divine goodness.

From the beginning of His ways, and throughout them, the Lord God has been evidencing His purpose to bring His creature *man* very near to Him. The expression of this has been different, but still constant.

In patriarchal days the intimacy was *personal.* He walked in the midst of the human family, personally appearing to His elect; not so much employing either prophets or angels, but having to do with the action Himself.

In the times of Israel, He was not so much in "the human guise" as before. He was rather in mystic dress. But still He was *near* them. The Lord in the burning bush, the glory in the cloud, the armed captain by Jericho, speak this nearness. The God of Israel seen on the sapphire throne, the glory filling the temple courts, or seated between the cherubim, tell the same. And the promises, "I will set My tabernacle among you ... and I will walk among you," and "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually," alike witness this desired and purposed fellowship.

Then, in the progress of the ages, the assumption of manhood is a witness, I may say, that speaks for itself; and the *ways* of God manifest in the flesh agree therewith. Jesus "came eating and drinking." And still the same, after He had become the *risen Man.* He had not then, it is true, one lodging and repast with His disciples, as once He had. He did not then, as before, go in and out among them. They were not to know Him "after the flesh," as in earlier days. But still there was full intimacy. There was many a note of conscious authority about Him, it

is most true. He speaks of all power in heaven and in earth being His. He opens their understandings. He pronounces peace upon them on new and authoritative grounds, He imparts the Holy Ghost, as the Head of the new creation. He blessed, as Priest of the temple, the only Priest. All this He does, as risen from the dead, with conscious power; but, with all this, He owns intimacy, loving, personal intimacy, as near and dear as ever, if not more so. He eats and drinks with them, as once He did. He calls them "brethren," as He had not done before His resurrection. He speaks of having one God and Father with them, as He had not done then. Though with all authority He sends them forth to work, yet does He still work with them. Mark xvi.; Luke xxiv.; John xx. And though He was at that time paying them only an occasional visit, a visit now and then, as He pleased, during forty days (Acts i. 3), yet He intimates, by a little action, that, by-and-by, all such distance and separation will be over, and they should "follow" Him to His place, risen and glorified with Himself. John xxi. 19-23.

Is not all this intimacy still? desired and enjoyed intimacy on the part of our "everlasting Lover"? And as to this present dispensation, the same is provided for and maintained, though in a different way. The Holy Ghost is come. The Spirit of truth is in us. Our bodies are nothing less than His living temples or dwelling-places, while the Son has, mystically, borne us to heaven in and with Himself. Eph. ii. 6. Surely no form of fellowship which we have contemplated is more deep and intimate than this. If, personally, the Lord God was with the patriarchs, and would take a calf and a cake in the love of hospitality--if, in the sight of the whole congregation, He would let the glory fill the temple courts in the joy of its new-found habitation--if, in "the Man Christ Jesus," the Lord God would walk with us, and share our seasons of rest and labour and refreshment, talking at a well with one elect sinner, or letting another press His bosom at supper, and ask Him about the secrets that were in that bosom--in this present day He has us, in the thoughts and affections of His own heart, up in heaven with Himself, and the Holy Ghost is here with us, in the midst of the thoughts and affections of our hearts.

Is this, I ask, intimacy of a feebler nature? Is this a retracing of His way back into His own perfections and sufficiency, or amid the glories and principalities of angels? Is this *reserve*, as men speak? Is this withdrawing Himself, or repenting of former intimacy with man, as though He had been disappointed and put off? "Adam, where art thou?" was His voice. But has Adam's retreat forced the Lord back? Let this one Witness, this Witness of our times, this indwelling Spirit, leading us in company with Himself after this manner, tell us. All His present way is only a richer pursuit of that purpose which broke forth, in infant form, in the days of Genesis.

And what shall we say of this intimacy in still future days? Redeemed men

take the place of cherubic nearness to the throne. The living creatures and the crowned elders are there, and the angels do but surround them as well as the throne. The Lamb's wife, the holy Jerusalem, bears the glory in her bosom. The Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.

But if all this be so, as it surely is, a holy inquiry arises, How are we to entertain this? In what spirit, and after what manner, are we to act on the truth of this gracious purpose of God? *We are to admit and believe it in all the simplicity in which it is revealed.* This is our first duty. We are by no means to refuse the thought of this divine nearness. Did John, I ask, refuse to lie on His Lord's bosom, or excuse himself for doing so? No. Neither are we, through mistaken humility, to question whether we have rightly interpreted the many scriptures which declare this truth. We are to use the privileges it confers.

But with this use of its privileges we are to honour its claims. For this presence of God is a *pure* as well as a *cheerful* element. Of old, the shoes were to be taken from the feet, when that presence was entered, to express the sense of holiness which became it. But that was all. Neither Moses nor Joshua were required to withdraw; only to tread softly. They were welcomed and encouraged, while instructed in the holiness of such intimacy.

So in the Canticles. The soul makes its boast of its Lord's love. It does not refuse to listen to the tenderest expressions of it, nor to recite His well-known desire towards her; but withal, there is owned and felt unworthiness. There is the breathing of the purest though most intimate thoughts--an affection quickly sensitive of the putting slight on such wondrous condescensions of divine love, and diligence in nourishing in the soul the answer due to them. And, thus, this little book gives very clear witness to the truth of God's intimacy with man, and to the manner in which it should be entertained by us. And in doing this it introduces us to a great divine mystery, which, in like manner, gets its early and constant illustration in the Book of God--a mystery which must now hold our thoughts for a little. I mean that of the Bride and the Bridegroom.

The Church is called "the Lamb's wife." But this title has its meaning. "The Lamb" is a figure or a description of the Son of God which tells us of the sorrows He endured for us. The soul well understands this; and therefore this title, "the Lamb's wife," tells us that it is by *His sufferings* the Lord has made her His own; that He valued her so as to give up all for her. And from the beginning He has been publishing this precious gospel truth.

Ere Adam received Eve he was cast into a deep sleep, and out of his side was taken a rib, of which was formed that one that was afterwards presented to him as his wife. This witnesses the mystery I have mentioned. Adam was humbled and

Adam suffered (I mean, of course, only in the symbol or mystery), ere he received Eve; all this casting beforehand the shadow of the humiliation and suffering of the true Adam, in acquiring His Eve for Himself.

So Jacob afterwards. He had to sustain the burthen and heat of a long and toilsome day, ere he could possess himself of Rachel. The law of her people, the law of her country, and the oppressive exactions of the covetous Laban, had put him on these terms. He had to endure the constant consuming of sun and moon, to toil night and day, and have his exile lengthened out, or go without his Rachel.

Joseph, ere he got his Asenath, was separated from his brethren.

The same thing we see in Moses. He too was separated from his brethren. And still more, he *earned* Zipporah. He rescued her from oppression, then opened the well to her and her flock, and then her father owned his claim to her hand. So with his second wife. He had to take her at the expense of his good name with his own kindred; she was a black Ethiopian, and did not suit the thoughts of his brother and sister. But he bore the reproach, and married the Ethiopian.

In each of these marriages (typical as well as real) we see *the character* of the Bridegroom; we see the Lord Jesus Christ possessing Himself of His Bride *at some personal cost.* Whether it be humiliation and suffering, as in Adam, toil and weariness and conflict, as in Jacob, separation and dreary loneliness, as in Joseph, or mere reproach, as doing a thing unworthy of him, as in Moses, still it is, in principle, a *suffering* Bridegroom that we see.

And I might notice Boaz, another type of the same. He was a mighty man of wealth, but he pleads the cause of a poor gleaner in his fields; he allows her approaches and her suit, and takes her to him to wife. He is not ashamed to make a destitute stranger, who but a day before depended on the bounty of his hand, the companion of his wealth and honour, and the builder of his house and name among the tribes of Israel. And thus the marriage of Boaz tells out the same mystery, that the Bridegroom of the Church is the One who had before been humbled to redeem her, and make her His own.

Not only, however, in types and illustrations is this great truth set forth, but in the plain teaching of Scripture also. It is said, that Christ loved the Church, then gave Himself for it, then sanctified it by the washing of the Word--and all this, that He might present it worthily to Himself as His Bride. Eph. v. Here, doctrinally, or in the way of plain teaching, we have the *Lamb the Bridegroom*; for ere He takes the Church *He gives Himself for her.* He takes to wife the one whom He had afore purchased with blood.

In Old Testament Scriptures, the same thing is taught, as between the Lord and Jerusalem, which is, *in principle*, the same as Christ and the Church.

Thus, in Isaiah it is said, Thy Maker is thy Husband, thy Redeemer--the whole passage showing Jerusalem taken up by the Lord in simple loving-kindness, He owning one that, like the Ethiopian or like Ruth, might be a reproach to Him. liv.

So Jeremiah represents the Lord in the very same grace, taking Jerusalem even after she had proved herself unfaithful, and been legally and judicially put away. iii.

Hosea is made the representative of the same. i.-iii. He buys his wife (iii. 2), he washes and cleanses her, as well as bears the reproach of espousing one in herself so worthless and lost.

So in the striking picture of Ezekiel. Jerusalem is looked at in her loathsome, offensive degradation; but when not one eye pitied, the Lord not only took compassion on, but quickened, washed, clothed, anointed, beautified, and endowed her, and did not stop till He had taken her to Himself. xvi.

Thus is it in the teachings or voices of the prophets, as in the early types and shadows; both and all telling out the mystery, that *the Lamb* is the *Bridegroom*, that the One who at the end seats her in the companionship of His glory, had before redeemed her by His blood, washed and purified her by His Word and Spirit, suffered reproach for her (Luke xix. 7), and gone down to her in her ruin, ere He could take her up to His estate and honour.

This is the mystery of the Divine Bridegroom. All human tales or fables fall short of this, let the imagination that wrought them up be as fervent as it may. This is the mystery of a love that passes knowledge between Christ and the Church. She must love Him for the service He has shown her; He must love her for the cost she has put Him to. She will find herself for ever by the side of One who so loved her as to die for her. He will see one by His side who so engaged Him that He was willing to go through with His affection, though the cost of loving her would take (to speak after the manner of men) all that He was worth. He cannot but prize her supremely, and so she Him. This only difference may be observed--that His love was proved ere she became His, for He had beforehand counted the cost of loving her--her love, later and more backward, and only in the second place, began on her knowing His love for her. For Christ, as the Bridegroom (as in everything else, whether of grace or glory, Col. i.), is to have "the pre-eminence." In the character of His love He entirely outshines the love of the bride, and leaves hers, as it were, no love at all, by reason of the love that excelleth.

But having thus looked at the Bridegroom, I would, in like manner, see the Bride for a moment or two. But I must limit myself, and will, therefore, only trace her as reflected in the Book of Genesis.

Eve is, of course, the earliest type. In her we see the personal characteristics of the bride: she is formed by the Lord for Adam. Adam's joy in a helpmeet was what the Lord proposed to Himself when He began to form Eve. He had respect to Adam's need and joy in this work. And when Adam receives Eve from the hand of the Lord, his words express his satisfaction in her, vindicating the Lord's workmanship, that His hand had accomplished the design which His love had undertaken. Eve was fitted to Adam. This was her full personal beauty. He owned her bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. *All in her was attractiveness.* She entirely answered the expectations, and satisfied the heart, of him for whom she had been formed. He took her and clave to her (Gen. ii.); and this, we know, is a type of Christ and the Church. Eph. v.

Sarah is the next distinguished female in that book; and she is a mystic person also. But it is not the Bride whom she expresses, but the Mother. So that I will not particularly notice her. For Abraham is "the father of all them that believe"--and Sarah is "the free woman" or, in an allegory, "the mother of us all" (Gal. iv.), linked with the family of God in the place of the mother, rather than with the Lord as His Bride. So that I pass her by.

Rebecca comes next in this holy line, and in her we have the Bride again, as in Eve. But great and blessed truths connected with the Bride are told in Rebecca. She is separated from Isaac. He is far away, and has never seen her. But Rebecca is the father's choice, and Eliezer's care, till Isaac receives her. Isaac longed for her. That is shown by his going forth in solitariness to meditate at eventide. But beyond the sense of this loneliness, we do not see Isaac doing or suffering anything for her. The council about the wife is taken between Abraham and Eliezer. They settle the whole plan. And Eliezer, in beautiful, self-denying service, goes on toil and travel to secure this elect Bride for Isaac. And he does secure her. And he prepares her for him. He not only separates her from her kindred and her father's house, but conducts her across the desert; on the way, doubtless, telling her many a tale of him whose she was so soon to be--till at length he gives her safely into Isaac's hand, and Isaac, like Adam, is comforted in his Bride.

This is a beautiful light in which to look at the Bride; the one who is brought home to her lord from the distant land, having been the object of the father's choice, and of the servant's care. This is a mystery. And in it we get the Lord receiving His Bride at the hand of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, chosen for Him, and given to Him, He having nothing to do but to take her at their hand, and to find in her, as Isaac found in Rebecca, the relief of his solitariness, the inmate of his tent, and the companion of all his joys.

Rachel, next in order, shows herself to us. And in her we get the Bride again, though in a different character. Here we find the one who was to own and enjoy her, travelling and toiling for her. And this is just as true, in the mystery,

as the other. For, in one sense, Christ has only to receive His Bride at the hand of the Father and the Holy Ghost, the gift of the one and the workmanship of the other--but, in another sense, He has Himself gone into the distant land, and (as I have already been observing on the Bridegroom) laboured and been put to reproach and wrong for her. In all this, Jacob sets forth the true Bridegroom. The Lord Jesus personally has borne the heat of the day *all alone*. He had not where to lay His head, like Jacob--absent from His Father's house, and the place of His inheritance--wronged again and again in a world which, like Laban and his house, ever seeks its own; and yet, enduring all this, and willing to endure all this, for the love that He had to her whom His eye had rested on; as Jacob's seven years of service seemed to him but as a few days, because of his love for Rachel.

This is as striking a picture of the truth as we have yet seen; here the same mystery of the Bride is still published to us, though still in a distinct part of it. In Eve, we had her full personal fitness for her Lord--in Rebecca, we had her as the object of the Father's election and the Spirit's care, in order to give her to Christ--in Rachel, we see her as the prize, whom the Lord sets before His own eye, for the sake of which He will give Himself to exile and toil and wrongs. As reflected in Isaac, He has nothing to do for her; as reflected in Jacob, He has everything to do for her.

Asenath closes these wonders. She is the woman of the fourth generation of the Patriarchs. There is the Sarah of Abraham, the Rebecca of Isaac, the Rachel of Jacob, and the Asenath of Joseph. She now in her turn takes up the same mystic tale. She was a Gentile, and in nowise, like the rest, connected in the flesh with Joseph. The enmity of his brethren had cast Joseph among her people. And he is honoured there, and with these strange and Gentile honours gets a Gentile bride and family; and in the bosom of this unexpected joy he is willing to forget, for a season, his father's house, and to account himself fruitful or happy, though among strangers.

This, in its season, is as full of meaning as any of our previous pages in this tale of the Bride. For here we get the Bride in her Gentile, heavenly character. Here we are told a great secret; that this same personage, whose beauty and personal characteristics we saw in Eve, whose election by the Father and conduct under the hand of the Spirit we saw in Rebecca, and whose purchase for Himself by the personal toil and sorrow of Christ we saw in Rachel, is a *Gentile*, a *Stranger*, one brought into union with the Lord, after His own kindred in the flesh had refused Him.

All this speaks clearly in the ear of the scribe that is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven; he traces the mystery of the Bride in all this, and listens to Eve, to Rebecca, to Rachel, and to Asenath telling out separate parts of it. And how does all this witness to us *the delight which Christ takes in His saints*! It is not

merely that He has saved them by His blood, but they are His crown and His joy, His glory and His delight. His own love and workmanship have been displayed in us, more highly than in any scene of His power. And this joy of Christ in His saints is strongly expressed in each of these cases. We love Him for the sorrows He has endured, and He loves us who thus prize His love. John xiv. 21. And if these affections be not understood as passing between Christ and the saint, if we do not, without reserve, allow this satisfaction in each other, our souls will not enter into much of that communion which the Scripture provides for. The Canticles will not be understood, if we do not allow and entertain the thought of Christ's delight in the saints, with the same certainty that we allow the thought of His having purchased and sanctified them by His blood.

But this communion must spring from intelligence of the soul, or it will be mere natural fervour. When Ruth sought the feet of Boaz, and did not again go to the gleaning-field, it was because Naomi had been instructing her further about him. Her soul had passed through the light of Naomi's words, and, thus taught, she desires more intimate fellowship with him than she had yet enjoyed. She seeks *himself*. The gleaning-field, where she was less than his handmaids, is deserted, and the place of a suitor for himself is assumed. She cannot call herself less than one of his handmaids any longer. She seeks a kinsman's love, for she knows him to be a kinsman. And this is truly blessed.

Love, or desire towards another, takes different forms in the heart. There is the love of *pity*, the love of *gratitude*, and the love of *complacency*. The love of pity regards its object in some sort as *below* it, and is full of tenderness. The love of gratitude, on the contrary, regards its object as *above* it, and is full of humility. The love of complacency does not necessarily look either above or below, but simply at its object, and is full of admiration. But, in addition to this, there is the love of *kindred*. It has its foundation in nature, and hence it is called "natural affection." And this love of kindred has a glory which is peculiarly its own. *It warrants the deepest intimacies.* There is no settling of one's self for the other's presence. There is full ease in going out and coming in. *Expressions* of love are not deemed intrusive--nay, they are sanctioned as being due and comely. The heart knows its right to indulge itself over its object, and that, too, without check or shame. This is the glory of this affection. The love of pity, of gratitude, or of complacency, must act decorously, and in proper form. But the love of kindred, the love of those who dwell in one house, and whom nature or the hand of God has bound together, feels its right to gratify itself, and is not fearful of being rebuked. See, for instance, Canticles viii. 1. This is its distinguishing boast. Nothing admits this but itself. This is, in a full and deep sense, "personal affection."

Parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives (and I might add, friends), know this. They know their title to indulge, without scorn or rebuke, in the warmest expressions of their mutual love. And it is the richest feast of the heart. The love of pity has its enjoyment, and so have the love of gratitude and the love of complacency; but they do not, in themselves and alone, warrant these *personal* fervours. Personally, their objects may be below, above, or at a distance, and should be approached with a due respect to all their rights. But not so with our kindred, because it is their *persons* and not *their qualities* or *conditions*, that form the ground of our love. We may deal with them without apology or reserve. In such cases it is *himself* that the heart embraces. It is not his sorrows, his favours, or his excellencies, but it is himself, which this affection handles and converses with.

We may receive a benefit from a person, and be assured of a hearty welcome to it, and yet feel ourselves ill at ease in his presence. Nothing is more common than this. Gratitude is awakened in the heart very deeply, and yet reserve and uneasiness are felt. It calls for something beyond our assurance of his good-will, and of our full welcome to his service, to make us at ease in the presence of a benefactor. And this something, I believe, is the discovery that we have an interest in *himself*, as well as in his *ability to serve us*.

This delineates, as I judge, the experience of the poor woman with the issue of blood. Mark v. She knew the Lord's ability to relieve her sorrow, and her hearty welcome to avail herself of it. She, therefore, comes and takes the virtue out of Him without reserve. But she comes *behind Him*. This expresses her state of mind. She knows her welcome to His service, but nothing more. But the Lord trains her heart for more. He lets her know that she is interested in *Himself*, as well as in *His power to oblige her*. He calls her "daughter." He owns kindred or relationship with her. This was the communication which alone was equal to remove her fears and trembling. Her rich and mighty patron is her kinsman. This is what her heart needed to know. Without this, in the spirit of her mind, she would have been still "behind" Him. But this gives her ease. "Go in peace" may then be said, as well as "Be whole of thy plague." She need not be reserved. Christ does not deal with her as a patron or benefactor. Luke xxii. 25. She has an interest in *Himself* as well as in His *power to bless her*. And so as to the Canticles. It is the love which warrants *personal intimacy* (after this manner of the nearest and dearest relationships) that breathes in this lovely book. The age of the union has not yet arrived. But it is the time of betrothment, and we are His delight. Nay, it was so ere worlds were. Prov. viii.

Do we believe this? Does it make us happy? We are, naturally, suspicious of any offer to make us happy in God. Because our moral sense, our natural conscience, tells us of our having lost all right even to His ordinary blessings. The

mere moral sense will therefore be quick to stand to it, and question all overtures of peace from heaven, and be ready to challenge their reality. But here comes the vigour of the spiritual mind, or the energy of faith. Faith gainsays these conclusions of nature. It refuses at times to think according to the moral sense of nature, as it refuses at times to act according to the relative claims of nature. In their place, the dictates of the moral sense and the claims of nature are sacred-—as we read, "Doth not even *nature* itself teach you, that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him?" But still they are not supreme. If God put in His claim, or make His revelation, the *relations* of nature and the *moral sense* of nature are to withdraw their authority. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." And in the revelation of God, faith reads our abundant title to be near to Him and happy with Him, though natural conscience and our sense of the fitness of things would have it otherwise. Faith feeds where the moral sensibilities of the natural mind would count it presuming even to tread.

I ask, then, Do we ponder, without reserve or suspicion, the thought of such love towards us in the heart of Jesus as this book suggests? Does it make us happy? We owe the love of children to God as our Father, the love of redeemed ones to God as our Saviour, the love of disciples to Jesus as our Master and Lord. But what is the love that we owe for this way of Christ's heart to us? How are we to meet it in a way worthy of it? This book, I believe, tells us. But this conducts the soul into the holiest. And what grief, and shame, and trouble of heart arise, when we reflect how little we are there, and how many tales against us all this is ever telling!

The Canticles do not give us the ways of filial affection, or of the affection due to a benefactor. But they give us, I believe, the actings of the love of espousals, in both Christ's heart and ours. The joy of hearing the Bridegroom's voice, I may say, is fulfilled here in the heart of the saint, as it was in the soul of the Baptist. And what, I would ask, are the attributes of a commanding affection like this? What do we find the power of it to be, when it seats itself in us?

As to *service*, it makes it welcome. To say that service for the object of this affection is "perfect freedom" is far too cold. It makes service infinitely grateful, even though it call for self-denial or weariness. And it can render its offering without caring for any eye or heart to approve it, but that of the one whom it has made its object. It cares not that others should be able to esteem its ways. It has all the desired fruit of its service, if its object approve it, and give but its presence at the end of it. As to *society*, this affection wants none but that of its object. If there be no weariness felt in service, as we have been saying, so is there no irksomeness known in solitude. All that is cared for is the presence of that one who commands

the heart. There is no sense of solitude, if that one *alone* be present; there is no sense of satiety, though that one be *always* present. As to *authority in the soul*, it holds its place, I need not say, unrivalled. It is the man of the heart. It breaks the bands and cuts the cords of other desires. It makes us undervalue all things but the one. It may take other things up, but this is only by the way. It is ever glancing at its own thing, even if others be for a time in the foreground. It looks through the lattices at it. Other things are esteemed according to their connection with it. And it will control the wrong and cultivate the right tendencies of the heart; for occasions which might wound vanity or gratify pride are not valued or pursued, while we retain it; and yet to approve ourselves there, we will nerve the heart and the hand to great and generous ways.

What intenseness is here! and what purity also! It refreshes the soul to think that we have been created susceptible of such affections. But the warning of another is in season. "Wherever a passion has these properties, or any of them, conspicuous in it, it cannot, but by being consecrated to God, avoid becoming injurious to Him and to itself. The very nobleness of it entitles Him to it." But the same one tells us that we should seek, not to *annihilate*, but to *transfigure* it. He says, "I would not have it swallowed up by death, the common fate, but be ennobled by a destiny like that of Enoch and Elias, who, having ceased to converse with mortals, died not, but were translated to heaven."

It is good for us to listen to this. The heart has been made deeply susceptible of this affection, and Christ is the offered object of it. He proposes Himself to it. He claims the supreme place in our hearts. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." Whatever passion of the soul be moved, it is God's right to have the highest exercise of it towards Himself. It has not treated Him as God if it have not rendered this to Him. If each of the passions of our souls do not give Him its richest and largest offerings, it is not a *worshipping* passion.

This we may readily grant, needing, however, increase of grace ourselves to be worshippers on such a score. In the language of another; "as, among the Jews, there were odoriferous unguents, which it was neither unusual nor unlawful to use themselves or bestow upon their friends, but also a peculiar composition of a precious ointment, which God having reserved for His own service, the perfuming of others with it was sacrilege, so there are regulated degrees of love which we may harbour for others, but there is too a certain peculiar strain of love which belongs unto God." Exod. xxx. 34-38. It is, I may add, idolatry when bestowed on a creature, but it is worship when rendered to Him.

This may sound a solemn truth, but it is a happy one. Is it not blessed to know that our Lord claims our hearts and their affections? Have any of us, beloved, read "the first and great commandment" without, at least, sometimes rejoicing in the grace that would make such a demand upon us? Mark xii. 30. Is

it nothing to us that God Himself values our love, that He says to us, "My son, give Me thine heart"? The wise virgins delighted in such truth. Many had gone out with them, professing the common expectation. The foolish had lamps. They took their place in the common profession. But the wise counted the cost of the Bridegroom's absence, and the hope of His return. In the spirit of their minds they had said that, let His delay be long or short, they must still wait, for that nothing could satisfy them but His presence. The night of His absence might be long or short-—they could not tell—-they would not undertake to say. It might be, as to its length, a summer night, or a winter night. But their hearts deeply owned this—-that nothing could close, nothing could turn that shadow of death into the morning, but the restored presence of the Bridegroom. On this their souls were fixed. And, therefore, they took vessels of oil, as well as lamps. They prepared for a night season, they counted on a darksome time, till Jesus returned. The expectation of their heart so supremely pointed to Him, that nothing could change hope to fruition but His presence; they must be expecting, expecting, and still expecting, till then. "Hope to the end" they purposed to do, for the grace that was to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It was a *worshipping* hope.

The early freshness faded, I doubt not. This may sustain us who are so conscious of the dulness and stupidity of our hearts. The brightness of that moment when the lamp was first lit is dimmed. "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." But the reality of supreme delight in Christ, and desire after Him, had not departed. The vessels were still at the side of the slumbering virgins. The oil had not to be *bought*, but only to be *used* afresh.

How does all this, as in a parable, tell of the heart cleaving to Jesus! And our Canticles express the same. And our own poets have sung of this love, as well as these mystic songs of the King of Israel:

"Jesus has all my powers possess'd,
My hopes, my fears, my joys,
He, the dear Sovereign of my breast,
Shall still command my voice.

"Some of the fairest choirs above
Shall flock around my song,
With joy to hear the name they love
Sound from a mortal's tongue."

The Church receives such breathings as not beyond the measure or the melody of the soul. And we want these affections to make us happy, and to set us free. It is a divine method of delivering us from the tyranny of carnal or worldly desires. It is the Spirit's way of spoiling other attractions of their power to seduce and fill the heart, and of lifting the soul above the frettings of low anxieties. Look at the commanding power of such affection in the poor sinner in Luke vii. Working in her heart as it did, she was deaf to the reproaches and blind to the splendours of the Pharisee and his entertainment. She knew only her Object. The feast and the guests were all lost upon her. This was the *power* of affection in her. And what was the *value* of it to Christ? Nothing that it dictated or did passed His notice. He appeared to be silent, and but the passive Receiver of her offerings; but He had noted them all. The tears, and the kiss, and the ointment, and all, had been noted in the book of His remembrance, and they are read therefrom, when the time for the opening of that book had come.

And look at the same in Mary at the sepulchre. She sees the angels. And they were dazzling, beautiful in their generation, and wondrous to the eye of flesh and blood. But what was all splendour to her then? The dead body of her Lord was her object, the fond image of her heart, and even heavenly glories can be passed by in the pursuit of it. So with David of old. His soul was full of joy in the Lord. He will dance before the ark, he would "play before the Lord;" and if such were shame, he purposed to be viler still. As with Zaccheus too, not a king like David, but a mere citizen of Jericho (for the Spirit links rich and poor, high and low, gentle and simple, as we speak, in one affection), he would press through the crowd, and without seeming to give the strangeness of the deed a thought, climb into a sycamore tree in pursuit of the desire which then commanded his heart.

Would that this, beloved, were more shed abroad in our hearts! How should we learn to entertain Christ, as this passion entertains or embalms its object! And what a heaven it will be, when He is ours in this way, feeding this fire in our souls, and giving us to know, in Himself and in His beauties, this seraph love without chill for ever and ever!

Would that our hearts were longing for Him! This is what we find breathed in the Canticles. It is not *filial* love or *grateful* love that would ever send this message, Tell him that "I am sick of love." It is more than that. Such is not the language of those affections, but such is the language of the Canticles. And, therefore, we cannot say less of this book, than that it is, after a mystic manner, the utterances of Christ and of a living, espoused soul--all springing from the faith which gives the soul the happy assurance of acceptance and favour with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As to the structure of it as a composition, I doubt not, for a moment, the correctness of those who treat it as "a collection of distinct idyls or little poems perfectly detached and separate from each other, with no other connection than what they derive from a common subject, the peculiarities of the style of a common author, and perhaps some unity of design in the mystic sense, which they are intended to bear." The spiritual senses of the saints are to be exercised in discerning the beginnings and endings of these different canticles or little songs, and in interpreting the holy mysteries they express. Different light, and different enjoyment in doing it, may surely be expected among us. But that these songs or little poems are allegories, we will none of us doubt. The intercourses of an espoused pair are the imagery; the love of Christ and the saint, the mystic sense. And warranted, I am sure, are the suggestions of another on this subject, "that there are those manifestations of His love, and those affections kindled in the heart towards the person of the Son of God, which may well borrow their allusions from the tenderest and most powerful affection which subsists among men." "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." "Thou shalt abide for me many days ... thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." These and kindred passages, with many typical histories in Scripture, and some ordinances of the law, all warrant this thought, as well as the character of the Spirit's inworking at times in the souls of the saints.

The divine authority of this book has never been questioned in any way worthy of the least regard from those who walk simply in the light of God, refusing man and his thoughts and his wisdom. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" It was ever reverenced by the Jews as a part of the oracles of God, and in that character, we may assure ourselves, received the sanction of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost in the Apostles. No one should pause for a moment to admit its value to the soul of the saint. "We may," as has been well said, "form but a guess concerning some of its beauties, but, in the hands of a Christian, it is invested with a brighter lustre than they could have discerned, who read it in the days of Solomon. For though, in regard to the exterior imagery of the allegories, some of their beauties may be lost, the hidden mystic sense is brought more to light, and manifested with fuller assurance to the believer under the Gospel dispensation. 'For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them.'"

There is no inquiry into the fact or the ground or the nature of our acceptance with God, in this book. Such questions and inquiries are settled beforehand. The communion is *upon* the settlement of them all, as I have already noticed. Acceptance with God is known. It is delight in Christ, occupation with Himself, that we get here. It is not the finding of Him out, nor is it the confession of sins. The communion is a *sinner's* communion, most surely--but it is of a consciously pardoned, accepted, and loved sinner. And when any sorrow or repentance is felt or owned, it is not for any blot or open transgression, but for some spiritual backsliding, some momentary coldness, some infirmity in maintaining or cultivating the soul's due fervour. This is much to be observed. Nothing gross, or even open, in conduct--nothing established as a habit is detected here--nothing that a soul that had not been already in simple and earnest fellowship with Jesus would have been apprehensive of. It is only *a present, temporary slothfulness of heart.* The very repentance and confession is of such a nature as intimates the fine tone of the soul that could feel and make it. The contact or touch is so tender, that the very perception of it speaks the delicacy of the organ which met it and resented it.

But what an element is this! Oh, how coarse, beloved, are our sensibilities compared with all this. Our poor souls are rarely here; they are engaged ofttimes in doing first works again, in grieving over the advantages which our lusts have taken of us, the surprisals which the heat of wrong tempers has wrought, and such like things. But all such occupation of the soul keeps us below this pure and spiritual delight in Christ, this sickness of love, this breathing on the mountains of myrrh, and this dressing and keeping of the garden of spices, here so blessedly presented. Surely it is but little of this we know. Is God our exceeding joy? Is it in the chambers of the King, in thoughts of glory, we walk? Is our spikenard greeting our Lord, and are our souls able to call Him nothing less than our "Beloved"? It were well indeed if such affections as these were filling and commanding our hearts. Then should we have weapons of sure victory wherewith to meet our enemies, and to beat down the intrusive desires and thoughts that defile us so often. In the figurative style of another we may say: "As when, in a clear morning, the rising sun vouchsafes to visit us, the bright stars which did adorn our hemisphere, as well as those dark shades which did benight it, vanish." Lust could not with any power come against a soul thus occupied. This "joy of the Lord" would indeed be our "strength." For what a dwelling-place opens here for faith to enter! What a banqueting-house for the soul! How far distant from fear and clouds of conscience such regions lie! The land of the turtle is this, the garden of all pleasant fruits.

But where is the precious faith to enter it and walk there? We need to cry for largeness of heart in the bowels of Christ Jesus. It is of influence on the whole soul to be occupied with such affections. It strengthens and sanctifies--for all questions

of our *standing* are anticipated, and our energy in *meeting temptation* is increased, and thus the *liberty* and *purity* of the soul are secured. For how can the thought of *condemnation* or the temptation to *defilement* be entertained, when the believer is seeking to reach more into the light and joy of such communion as this? Does it not lead him into more than a mere escape from a spirit of bondage, or from practical evil? Is it not the divine method of making him more than conqueror?

As expressing such communion as this, this book of the Song of Songs may suit any saint. Not, however, that I mean, that we may necessarily follow one path of experience, and go from one stage therein to another. But according to the soul's enlarging knowledge of Jesus, so will, of course, be its enlarging experience. And there ought to be *progress*--as we read, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And as the different relations in which the Lord stands to us are apprehended and embraced by the soul, corresponding experiences will arise, for experience is our entrance into the power of these relations. And the Canticles I judge to be the utterances of the soul at one point of this journey, from the first quickening to the full and final enjoyment. It is not the experience of Rebecca when first awakened to leave Mesopotamia, nor of Ruth, when first made ready, in Moab, to take the God of Naomi as her God, nor as afterwards a gleaner in the field--it is the exercise of Rebecca's heart, while on the way to Isaac, listening to the tales of her gracious and wise conductor, and of Ruth at the feet of Boaz, as the suitor of his hand and name.

This is the general moral of the book. But this being so, I can the more admire the perfectness of the Spirit in making this a short book. It is of too intimate a character to have been much spread out. It lies within. It is the recesses of the Temple. It was called by the Jews the "holy of holies." And that was the smallest place, as well as the most retired. It expressed the deepest character of communion with God. There was one communion at the Brazen Altar or the Brazen Laver in the courts--another in the holy place, at the Table, the Candlestick, and the Altar--and another in the presence of the Lord Himself, in the holiest. And of this character of communion is that which the Canticles express. It may be that the soul cannot at all times enter into it. Ruth would not have been prepared for laying herself at the feet of Boaz when she entered his field as a gleaner. The teaching she got from Naomi was needed to bring her into the threshing-floor.

And this little book seems to open with the soul expressing all this. It opens with strong and fervent desire toward *Himself*; reaching forth to apprehend Him in some more intimate manner than had been previously understood. It is as though the saint had been conscious of being in a lower condition than would now satisfy. For at times the soul rests itself simply on the firm ground of doctrines; such as "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." It is the simple and sure power of such truth that alone answers, at times, the need of the

soul. But again, at times, the ground under our feet, as believers, is understood and rested on, and it is the Lord Himself that the soul desires. And such is its condition here. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." She had been keeping the vineyards--attending to things abroad, but now was learning that her own vineyard had been neglected; and the deeper things of personal fellowship are longed for. The saint is leaving Martha's and taking Mary's place, longing to feed under His own eye and from His own hand, and not another's. And at the close, the soul appears to know that *it had become a keeper of its own vineyard.* At the beginning there had been the grief that the vineyards of others had been kept, but that her own had been neglected (i. 6); but now, it is conscious of being more at home, more about its own vineyard; as though it had left the Martha place, busy about many things, and assumed the Mary place, at the feet of Jesus in personal communion. viii. 12.

This is the advance, the conscious, happy advance, which the soul makes through these exercises. It has reached a higher order of communion with the Lord, and it desires that this may continue till Jesus return.

The very style of the writing, too, is just that which suits the heart under the power of a commanding affection. "Let *Him* kiss me with the kisses of His mouth"--like Mary Magdalene to the supposed gardener--"If thou have borne *Him* hence"--both *meaning* Christ, but neither *naming* Him. For "the heart had been before taken up with the thoughts of Him, and to *this relative* these thoughts were the antecedent--that good matter which the heart was inditing. For they that are full of Christ themselves are ready to think that others should be so too." Or, it is as the language of the Apostle, who *means* the day of glory and of the kingdom without *naming* it, when he says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against *that day*;" and again, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at *that day*."

Thus is it, in the very style and manner of the renewed mind, eyeing, as it does, both the Lord Himself and the glory. And blessed are these affections. The truth or the doctrine of the Gospel is no cold, rigid system. Surely our souls must know this. It is at times laid down in propositions, taking the form of an argument, deducing conclusions from adequate and proved premises. But still the Gospel calls for the warmest affections, and abundantly provides for them. *Even the Canticles themselves never pass beyond the strict bounds of the Gospel--they never exceed that measure which the strictest rules of evangelic truth would prescribe.* So that we should interpret these little songs or idyls in the light of the didactic Scriptures, as we may profitably read those Scriptures in the warmth of these

Canticles. The Apostle says, "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." This assumes all that is in the Canticles. And in this way, the Gospel, in its strictest meaning, will account for all that is in Solomon's Song. The latter delineates those affections which well suit such truths and revelations as the former teaches or delivers. But this being so important, as I judge, I desire to instance it in a few particulars.

In these idyls, the Lord looks on the saint as altogether lovely. And so in His eyes is the believer. A sinner in himself, he has, by faith, taken on him the beauty of Christ. He is "in Him." He has "the righteousness of God" upon him. He is "accepted in the Beloved." Faith alone gives him all this comeliness. He has been baptized into Christ, and put on Christ. This is the beauty of the believer; and he is lovely in Christ's eye, as the Canticles again and again express.

Indeed in this form of beauty there can be no spot. For it is Christ Himself that the believer is arrayed with. The very "best robe" in the Father's house is on him. It is a spotless beauty he shines in. The doctrine of the Gospel teaches us this, and here Christ utters His delight in it; such harmonies are there between the Gospels and the Canticles.

But further. In the mystery of Christ and the believer, Christ has a mountain of myrrh to which He here invites the believer to turn his steps--and St. Paul exhorts us, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth." The believer mounts those hills with Jesus as here invited, and as in the Gospel exhorted. His conversation is in heaven. In Christ he sits in heavenly places. And he savours of the myrrh and the frankincense which are there.

Again, the Lord delights in the graces of His saint. He rests, with the love of complacency, in the believer who walks in the Spirit before Him. John xv. 10. She is an enclosed garden under His eye, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. As we read, the Spirit is in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. He has the savour of the spices, and the flowings of the living water, *in himself*, and the fragrancy and freshness of these gladden his Lord anew. This is the teaching of the Gospel, and this is the language of Christ in the Canticles. He delights in what is *in us* through the Spirit, as well as in what is *on* us through faith. He has His joy in the places of communion with His elect here, as in the heaven to which He has ascended.

This is largely told us in Scripture. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house, *so* shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." Psalm xlv. Here is something beyond *imputed* beauty. For here we learn the grace in her which kindles His desire. She has forgotten her own people and her father's house, so the King desires her. And she owns Him as Lord, and worships Him. She will

render Him affection and homage. And all of this suited and attractive grace was shown in Rebecca. *She left all for Isaac.* She forgot her own people and her father's house, and came across an unknown desert in company with a stranger, in the singleness and devotedness of an undivided heart. And on reaching him for whom she had consented to all this, *she lights from her beast, and veils herself.* She puts on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. She arrays herself in shamefacedness and sobriety. She loves, and yet bows. And *so* Isaac desires her. And so is the Church to be *subject* to Christ, and yet *love* Him with virgin love. Eph. v.; 2 Cor. xi. 2.[33]

And in the Canticles we find the Spirit of Christ inviting His saint into the liberty of this present time, into the atmosphere of a house where the cry of adoption is heard. All the darker and colder age is passed. All that dispensation which kept the soul in bondage and fear is over. The voice of the turtle is heard; the voice of that perfect love which casts out fear. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth," says St. John, as though he had the Canticles in mind. The saint should now arise, taking his place as the *loved* and the *fair* one, being in the full consciousness of personal unspottedness and beauty, through grace, and of his Lord's perfect favour and delight. He should come away from "the spirit of fear," and pass over into the spirit of love and of power "and of a sound mind." For all in the dispensation is gladdening. The flowers appear on the earth, and the singing of birds is heard. All is promise, all pledge, and earnest, and seal, and unction.

And again, if the betrothed one of the Canticles *say*, "While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof," the disciple in the gospel *does* this. John xii. 3.

And, according to all this, we may observe how some of the tenderest utterances of this book are warranted by the simple narratives of the Gospel. If the beloved watch over the restored soul with the fondest jealousy, not allowing the busy foot of others to disturb the silent, hidden rest of the loved one, what does Jesus do in the favoured house at Bethany less than this? How does He check the motions of Martha? Ch. ii. 7; Luke x. 41.[34]

The great moral principles of truth are also strictly and fully understood here, though under very delicate and spiritual illustrations. St. James says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." In this book we read, "By night upon my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not." The great moral principle, that *there is a seeking which does not find*, is equally owned in each of these scriptures; but

[33]Affection begets confidence. Rebecca committed herself to Eliezer, *never asking her father or brother for an escort.* So the more singly we love Jesus, the more confidently will our souls trust Him and His supplies for us alone, without confidence in the flesh or anything else.

[34]"Till *she* please," it ought to be, as the "love" is the female in this book. Ch. ii. 7; iii. 5; vii. 4.

the one has a much more delicate exhibition of it than the other. Jesus is here sought *on the bed*, that is, in some listlessness of mind. The bed may be the place of *meditation* (Psalm lxiii.; Isa. xxvi.), but not of *seeking*, which demands action. And thus the seeker *on the bed*, the listless, drowsy inquirer after the Lord, will not, till he pass through discipline, as here (iii. 1-5), find Him.

If Christ again and again express His deep satisfaction in her, through this book, what have we less than this in the strict teaching of Scripture? Did He not find, at the beginning, that His "delights were with the sons of men"? and at the end, when He sees of the travail of His soul for us, will He not be "satisfied"? Prov. viii.; Isa. liii. If the sinner be content with Him, so is He equally with the sinner. The woman at the well, it is true, forgot her waterpot for Him; but He forgot His *thirst* for her, and that was greater. And then, in like enjoyment of spirit, He said, on the very same occasion, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." John iv.

From the first to the latest moment of our Christian history, our power to refresh the mind of our Lord is deeply and fully owned in Scripture. Our earliest confidence in Him as sinners sets Him at once at a feast (as we have just seen, John iv. 32), there to make merry with his friends (Luke xv. 9); for angels rejoice. The recovery of a wanderer has like joy for Him. Read the utterance of the divine affection over repentant Ephraim, in Jer. xxxi. 20. And what under the eye, and to the heart of our Lord, are the comely walk of the saints, and their goings in the sanctuary? Is not "a meek and quiet spirit" in God's sight "of great price"? Does not the pure behaviour of the believer *please* Him, convey complacency or delight to the divine mind? 1 Thess. iv. 1. And how is such complacency in us witnessed again and again by the promise that He will manifest Himself to us, and make His abode with us! John xiv.

Does not all this make good the suggestions of this book? And so, in the Gospels as well as in the Canticles, is not Christ borne away in the chariots of Amminadib, the chariots of His willing people? Where, I ask, did the report of the seventy bear Him? Luke x. 17, 18. Where did the desire of the Greeks translate Him? John xii. 21-23. And the faith of the Gentile soldier could, for a moment, hold His spirit in delight and admiration, and then bear Him onward to the glory, when the East and the West shall send home the children of the kingdom with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Matt. viii. 8-11.

But the affection which can be thus *gratified* may be *wounded*. These are among the properties of love. You may grieve as well as refresh the loving heart. And so it is with our Lord, both in the Canticles and in the Gospels; as we read also in the Epistles, "*Grieve* not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

And again. The betrothed one here knows that the heavens (symbolized by hills and mountains) have received her Beloved. But she knows also that though

He be *at home* there, like a roe or a young hart upon its *native* hills, yet that He delights in communion with her, and visits her, desirously looking through the lattices. And further still; she knows that her duty it is to watch against intrusion and disturbance, as the keepers of a vineyard would watch against the young foxes. And I ask, Is not all this the truth, the enjoyment, and the practical energy, again and again recognized and enforced in the teaching of the Gospel? We know that the heavens have received Jesus until "the times of refreshing." We know that He makes His present abode with the saint, and manifests Himself to him, as He does not unto the world. And we know that there is to be energy and watchfulness that we "walk in the spirit," and not "in the flesh," if we would taste and enjoy these manifestations of His name to our souls.

So, still further, there is a garden, in this book, under the tillage of the north wind and the south wind, that it may yield its fruits and its spices to the Lord. And does not the severer style of the New Testament abundantly admit the idea? The Father Himself is the Husbandman of a vine which He digs about and dungs; and the saint is as a field that drinketh in the rain from heaven, to yield herbs meet for Him by whom it is dressed. John xv.; Heb. vi.

In the imagery here we have Christ as a Suitor at the door, asking of the one He loves admission from "the drops of the night;" and in the New Testament we have Him standing and knocking at the reluctant heart, desiring that entertainment which revived and zealous affection would surely provide Him. Rev. iii. 20. And well for us, beloved, if our lukewarm Laodiceanism do but depart, like the drowsiness of this dear one in this lovely mystic song. Chap. v. 2-16.

And I know not that the constant self-congratulation of the espoused one in this book is a whit beyond that of Paul. She can always talk of her Beloved being hers, and say moreover, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me." But he can also always, in spirit, sing (let the toil and wear of life be what they may), "The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, *Who loved me, and gave Himself for me*." And that is the language of Paul, happy in the assurance of Christ's devoted love to him.[35]

If, I may also say, in the imagery of this book, the loved saint can say, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste," the plainer style of an epistle is not less fervent. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Surely the heart is equally in possession of an Object which it knows is fitted to answer all its desires.

And further still. We have, in the actions of this book, souls in different

[35]It is commonly interpreted as though Paul, in Gal. ii. 20, were expressing his *devotedness* to his Master. But this is not so. This robs the verse of its exquisite glory. He is rather speaking of the joy of his soul in the knowledge of what a devoted and glorious Lover he had.

elevations, the betrothed one, and "the daughters of Jerusalem." How much is that known among themselves, and contemplated in the illustrations and teachings of the New Testament! All are not fully formed--not fully in the measure of the stature, so to express it. "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts." All are not alike in the liberty of the dispensation. Such draw out the sympathy of the saint established in the grace of God, and solicitous care, and prayer, and inquiry of the Lord, are made about such, as here. See chap. viii. 8.

Indeed, I know not that anything can be more in the harmonies of the Spirit, in the combined and glowing lights of the Gospel, than the utterance of the betrothed one in this short passage. Chap. viii. 8-10. The actings of her soul, both towards others and towards the Lord, are the Spirit's sweetest and choicest workmanship. She has respect to "the infirmity of the weak," desiring for them strength and edifying in the fuller measure of Christ, and yet all the time owning full oneness and relationship with them in Him, while she rejoices in her own certain, happy assurance, and the fulness of her growth, even to an ecstasy, that her breasts were like towers! and because of that, knowing her Lord's favour towards her, and delight in her. And sure we may be, that all this is purely and richly the way of a believing, renewed soul. Full adoption of the weak, with desires for their larger liberty and assurance, and yet certainty of personal standing in the most undimmed joy of entire assurance, with perfect persuasion that all this liberty and confidence were thoroughly to the heart and mind of Jesus.

Nothing can be more perfect, I believe, than all this in the harmonies and lights of a spiritual mind, according to the strictest sense of evangelic truth.

So again and again, in the gospel history, we find Jesus led to forget His sorrows when beholding faith in a sinner. He found there, as I have already stated, the refreshment of His spirit. He found a transient forgetting of His sorrows among the Samaritans, from the Centurion, from Zaccheus, and from the spikenard and fellowship of Mary. He seeks the same here. He comes to His espoused one, that He might find, in fellowship with her, some other and far different thing than that rejection and refusal which He was ever meeting in the world. And is it not also so, that if the saint be sluggish and careless, the faithful kindred in Christ will help the discipline? If Jesus say, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Paul will say, "Quit you like men, be strong." So in the action of this book. Jesus leaves a memorial of the soul's drowsiness on "the hole of the door," that the conscience may take alarm; and the watchman of the city smite her, and the keepers of the walls draw the veil from her face. Chap. v.

The harmonies of the "one Spirit" are heard in all this. And so, in the course of these little songs, I discern the way of the Lord toward a repentant, recovered soul. See chap. vi. 4-13. She had just refused to open her door to Him, but, through discipline, had been brought to fervent communion with Him again. v. 2-vi. 3.

And now His eye and His heart are full of her again. He looks on her as beautiful as ever. She is His "undefiled," and nothing less; no upbraidings pass His lips. Her motion towards Him is comely and graceful in His esteem. And He lets her know that her repentance had given Him pleasant and wondrous refreshment. As soon as she was made willing (Psalm cx. 2), He got into a chariot to bear Him away speedily and joyously to her. vi. 12, margin. She may be a wonder to herself, she may take a place unworthy of any notice (v. 13); but the Lord and angels rejoice over her. As we know in the Gospels, the ninety and nine just ones can be left for the one prodigal; the angels in heaven rejoice; the house makes merry; the friends of the beloved triumph over the returned Shulamite. She is like the returned Jacob: the Mahanaim, the hosts of God, salute them both, wait at the threshold of the land or of the house, to do their Lord's pleasure toward them, and express His welcome and concern for them. Gen. xxxii. 1; Cant. vi. 13.[36]

And what is the longing here but that the day should break? And what is the longing of the same soul in the words of the Gospel? "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,"--so largely and so exactly do the teachings and the breathings of the New Testament, in these and kindred ways, measure the affections of the heart in this book? Christ dwells in the heart by faith. Christ lies all night between the breasts. Eph. iii. 17; Cant. i. 13. And has not the saint attuned his heart over Jesus in language of like fervour, such as we all use without shame?

"How tedious and tasteless the hours
When Jesus no longer I see,
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers,
Have lost all their sweetness for me;
The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay,
But when I am happy in Him,
December's as pleasant as May.

"His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music His voice,
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice:
I should, were He always so nigh,

[36]Another once observed to me, that in the Canticles, the Beloved expresses *directly to herself* the beauties He discerns in her; the betrothed one never does this, but recites His beauties *in the ears of others*; and further observed, that there was great moral propriety in this, something quite according to the dictate of a delicate affection.

Have nothing to wish or to fear,
No mortal so happy as I,
My summer would last the whole year."

These are among the seals set upon this beautiful portion of God's Word by the spiritual mind of the believer, and also by kindred truths and principles found in other scriptures. And it has been happily said, that "if there be no express allusion to this book in the New Testament, the same allegory, as portraying the same truth, evidently appears to have been familiar to the minds of the writers of it, and to the minds also of the people whom they addressed. Not more abruptly does John the Baptist, for instance, refer to our Lord as 'the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,' as being the character of the Messiah which all would know and understand, than he does to the same blessed Person in the character of the Bridegroom of the Church--'he that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom.'"

And is it not seasonable, in these days of growing irreligiousness and worldliness, to warn one another, beloved, to keep our minds incorrupt in the simplicity that is in Christ? In the preparation-season, which the present age is, and which the Canticles contemplate, Eve was getting ready, under the forming hand of God, for Adam, and for Adam *only*. Adam slept for Eve, and Eve was made for Adam. So with Christ and the Church. He slept in death for us, and we are preparing, under the Holy Ghost, for Him. "I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." As he says also in another place, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again till *Christ* be formed in you," Christ, and Christ only, Christ in His precious sufficiency for a sinner, in answer to the Hagar or Galatian thought of "days, and months, and times, and years," that other gospel which yet is not another.

But this is assailed. The Gospel, in its claim on the sinner to give his undivided confidence to Christ, has been abroad on the lips of a thousand witnesses, to the gladdening of thousands of souls. The enemy has watched and hated this. Working in the scene in which he goes "to and fro" and "up and down" (Job i. 7), he is busy to seduce the heart from this Gospel. And is not his success far beyond the measure of the fears of any of us? The religion of fleshly confidences or of ordinances is to this hour among us. It admits of worldliness; and worldliness is, at this same hour, flourishing in company with it. There is the erection of temples for worship, and of palaces for the worshippers; stricter care to observe, in its season, due attendance in the sanctuary, together with unparalleled skill and energy and enterprise in advancing the indulgence and elegance of human life, so as to make the world a *desirable* and *safe* place to live in--a place where religion may now be seen to be observed and honoured.

This is all seductive from the principle of faith--this is corruption of the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ. The Gospel addresses itself to man, not only as a *guilty* but as a *religious* creature. It finds him under the power of *superstition* or *religiousness*, as well as of sin. It is as natural for man to refuse to go into the judgment-hall lest he should be defiled, as it is, in very enmity to God, to cry out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." And the Gospel gets as stern a refusal from the *religious* man as from the *lustful* man. As the Divine Teacher tells us, the harlot goes into the kingdom before the Pharisee.

Religious vanities are deeply playing their part in our day, and fascinating many souls. What answer, beloved, do you and I give them? Is Jesus so precious that no allurement has power? Is the virgin purity of the mind still kept? and as chaste ones are we still betrothed to Christ only? Like the newly-formed Eve, are we in our place of earliest, freshest presentation to our Lord? or have we, apart from His side, opened our ear to the serpent?

The kingdom of heaven is as a supper, a royal, joyous feast got ready for sinners, that they might taste and see that the Lord is good, and that blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. It does not put God in the place of a *receiver*, for man *to bring Him His due*; but it puts Him in the place of a *giver*, and man is called *to value His blessing*. But the question is, Who listens, with desirous heart, to the bidding? Who wears "the wedding garment"? Who prizes Christ? Who triumphs in His salvation? Who longs for the day of His espousals? John had this garment on him, knowing, as he did, the joy of being the Bridegroom's friend. It was flowing at liberty on Mary's shoulders, as she sat at her Lord's feet and heard His words. Paul tucked it tight about him when he said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The eunuch had just put it on as "he went his way rejoicing" in the faith of the name of Jesus. Every sinner adorns himself with it the moment his heart values Christ. And what joy is it thus to know that when we put on Christ it is not "sackcloth" we put on, nor is it "the spirit of heaviness" we enter into, but "a wedding garment" has clothed us, and with "the garment of praise" we array our spirits!

Have we thus learned "the kingdom of heaven"? Have we, in spirit, entered it as a banqueting-hall where both magnificence and joy welcome us? Are we, consciously, guests at the marriage of a King's Son? Have we learnt the mysteries of the faith? Have we gazed at them? Has the musing over them kindled a fire in the heart to burn up the chaff of worldly rudiments? Paul had this element in his soul as he travelled through Greece. And how did the glow of these mysteries address itself to "the princes of the world" there? It consumed them all. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" Precious ardour of the Spirit! What a pile was thus fired in the famed cities of the learned and the wise! and how were all the thoughts of men thrown as rubbish into it!

And how did he treat the rudiments of the *religious* world? He bore the same fervent sense of Christ with him into their regions, to test what chaff and dross were there. In Galatia he found much of it; but he spared none of it. Though an angel from heaven gather such rubbish; though Peter himself help in the work; though the Galatians, who once would have plucked out their eyes for him, be enticed, nothing should stand before the heat of the Spirit that bore him onward. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?... Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you."

Could he do less? Could he carry Jesus in his heart, and calmly stand and measure his light with the lights of Greece, or God's great ordinance with man's traditions?

It is to make much of Christ we want, beloved--much of Himself, and His glorious achievements for sinners. We want simplicity in that sense of the word--the breathings of a soul content with Him, and the peace of a conscience for ever at rest in His sufficiency. "What think ye of Christ?" is the test, as a dear hymn well known among us has it--

"Some call Him a Saviour, in word,
But mix their own works with His plan,
And hope He His help will afford,
When they have done all that they can:
If doing prove rather too light
(A little they own they may fail),
They purpose to make up full weight
By casting His name in the scale.

"Some style Him the pearl of great price,
And say He's the fountain of joys,
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys--
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And, while they salute Him, betray--
Ah, what will profession like this
Avail in His terrible day!

"If asked what of Jesus I think,
Though all my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;

My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall,
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my all."

May these thoughts and affections be ours. They are the sweet witness of the one faith, the one Lord, the one Spirit (Eph. iv.), for they express the leading, ruling mind of the Canticles. There the soul in kindred affection has but one object, but that one is enough. It is satisfied, and never for a moment looks for a second. It has the "Beloved," and cares for nothing else. If it grieve, it is over the want of capacity to enjoy Him. It seeks for nothing but Jesus, lamenting only that it is not more fully and altogether with Him. And this is the experience we have to desire--to find in the Lord a satisfying object, a cure for the wanderings of the poor heart, which, till it fix on Him, will go about and still say, "Who will show us any good?" "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

"That unsatisfiedness with transitory fruitions which men deplore as the *unhappiness* of their nature is indeed the *privilege* of it." Just indeed, and truly to be prized, is such a sentiment. For this thirsting again, this spending of "labour for that which satisfieth not," casts the heart on Jesus, As this has ever been, so is it now. The building of palaces, the planting of vineyards, the getting of singing-men and singing-women, the multiplying of the delights of the children of men, all these efforts and travails of the heart take their course and have their way still. Eccles. ii. But Jesus revealed to the heart, as in this book, commands these thoughts and purposes away. It speaks the language of the blessed Lord Himself; and the experience in it is the experience of the poor woman who was able to leave her pitcher at the well--"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star.... Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The scene of the divine handiwork was twofold; and, accordingly, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," God will display Himself again, both in *heaven* and on *earth*.

I would begin my meditation on this divine subject with Genesis i-xlvii., which presents, I judge, a beautiful view of the Lord acting, by turns, as in heaven and on earth, till, at the close, we find them together in a way typical of what their connection and yet distinctness will be in that coming dispensation of the fulness of times. May our meditations be always submitted to His truth and Spirit, and conducted in the temper of worshippers.

Genesis I. II.—-It was only of the *earth* that Adam was made lord. The garden was his residence, and he was to replenish and subdue the earth. This was the limitation of his inheritance and of his enjoyments. He knew of heaven only as he saw it above him, and by its lights dividing his day and his night. But he had no thoughts which linked him, personally, with it.

III.—-But Adam transgressed and lost the garden, and became a drudge in the earth, instead of being the happy lord of it. Gen. iii. 17-19. He was now to get a bare existence out of it, till he was laid down in death upon it.

IV. V.—-Such was his changed condition. To cling to the earth now as one's delight and portion was to act in bold defiance of the Lord of judgment. And such was the spirit of Cain and his family. He thought the earth good enough for God, and desired nothing better for himself. He gave God the fruit of it, and built a city for himself on the face of it, furnishing it with desirable things of all sorts, unmoved by the thought of the blood with which his own hand had stained it, and of the presence of the Lord, on whom he had turned his back. But such was not Adam, or Abel, or Seth, or that line of worshippers who "call on the name of the Lord." They have in the earth only a burying-place. But grace having provided a remedy for them as sinners, and righteousness having separated them from a cursed earth, they believe in the remedy, and seek no place or memorial in the earth, and the Lord gives them a higher and a richer inheritance, even in *heaven* with Himself, as signified in the translation of Enoch.

VI.-IX.—-But though the Lord is thus removing the scene of His counsels and the hopes of His elect from earth to heaven, yet the earth is not given up. It is, we know, destined to rejoice, by-and-by, in the liberty of the glory; or, as I have already quoted, in "the dispensation of the fulness of times." Eph. i. 9, 10. And, accordingly, this purpose the Lord will at times rehearse and illustrate, as He does now, in due season, in the history of Noah.

The heavenly family, as we have just seen, only died both to and in the earth. They could speak, it is true, both of its coming judgment and blessing. Enoch foretold of the one, and Lamech of the other. Jude 14; Gen. v. 29. But they were, neither of them, *in* the scenes they thus talked about. But Noah, who comes after them, is a man of *the earth* again. In his day the earth re-appears as the scene of divine care and delight. God has communion with man upon it again. It has passed through the judgment of the water, and God makes a covenant with it, has the prophet, priest, and king upon it, providing for its continuance and godly government. Noah's connection with it was quite unlike that of either Cain or Seth. He did not, like the former, fill it and enjoy it in defiance of God; nor did he, like the latter, take merely a burying-place in it; but he enjoyed the whole of it under the Lord. The Lord sanctioned his inheritance of it, his dominion over it, and his delight in it.

X. XI.—-Thus the earth, in its turn, again takes up the wondrous tale, and is the care and object of the Lord. But again it becomes corrupt before Him. Noah himself, like Adam, begins this sad history, and the builders of Babel, like another family of Cain, perfect the apostasy, seeking to fill the earth with themselves independently of God. They were mighty hunters before the Lord. They scoured the face of the earth, as though they asked, in infidel pride, "Where is the God of judgment?"

XII.-XXXVI.—-This, however, was not allowed. Another judgment comes upon them. They are scattered, and the whole human social order is awfully broken up. But Abram is called out to find his fellowship with God, apart from the world. His family dwelt in Mesopotamia beyond the Euphrates. He came from the stock of Shem, but was a worshipper of idols, as all the nations were. But sovereign grace distinguishes him, and the God of glory calls him forth from kindred, from home, and from country.

It is a call, however, that does not interfere with the order of the earth, or government among the nations. He is called to be a *stranger*, and not a rival of "the powers," or a new-modelled governor of any people. He walks with God as the God of glory--a higher character than that of the one by whom "the powers that

be are ordained." He is a pilgrim and stranger on earth, and walks as a *heavenly man.* He has promise that *his seed* and *inheritance in the earth* shall become linked together by-and-by; but he, with Isaac and Jacob, dwell in tents all their days, and a tent life is that of a stranger here, of one that is not at home and at rest.

Here, then, we have a heavenly people again--heavenly in the character of their walk, and heavenly, like Enoch or Lamech, in their intelligence about the earth's future history, and the promise to their seed of inheritance in it in due season. But we have still deeper and fuller mysteries in the history of him who comes after them.

XXXVII.-XLVII.--Through the wickedness of his brethren, as we all know, for it is a favourite story, Joseph is estranged from the scene of the promised and covenanted inheritance, and becomes first a sufferer, and then a husband, a father, and a governor, in the midst of a distant people; till at last his brethren, who once hated him, and the inhabitants of the earth, are fed and ruled by him in grace and wisdom.

Nothing can be more expressive than all this. It is a striking exhibition of the great result purposed of God "in the dispensation of the fulness of times." Joseph is cast among the Gentiles; and there, after sorrow and bondage, becomes the exalted one, and the head and father of a family with such joy, that his heart for a season can afford to forget his kindred in the flesh. This surely is Christ in heaven now, exalted after His sorrows, and with Him the Church taken from among the Gentiles, made His companion and joy during the season of His estrangement from Israel. But in process of time Joseph is made the depositary and the dispenser of the world's resources; his brethren, as well as all beside, become dependent on him; he feeds them and rules them according to his pleasure. And this as surely is Christ, as He will be in the earth by-and-by, with Israel brought to repentance and seated in the fairest portion of the earth, and with all the nations under His sceptre, when He will order them according to His wisdom, feed them out of His stores, and re-settle them in their inheritance in peace and righteousness.

Surely the heavens and the earth are, in type, here seen, as they will really be in "the dispensation of the fulness of times," when all things, both in heaven and on earth, shall be gathered together in Christ. Surely this is a rehearsal of the great result, and the heavens and the earth tell out together the mystery of God!

And I cannot but observe the willing, unmurmuring subjection which the Egyptians yield to Joseph. He moves them hither and thither, and settles them as he likes, but all is welcome to them; and so, in the days of the kingdom, the whole world will be ready to say, Jesus has done all things well. What blessedness! Subjection to Jesus, but willing and glad subjection! His sceptre getting its approval

and its welcome from all over whom it waves and asserts its power!

And again I observe that all this power of Joseph is held in full consent of Pharaoh's supremacy. The people, and the cattle, and the lands, are all bought by Joseph *for* Pharaoh. It is Pharaoh's kingdom still, though under Joseph's administration--as in the kingdom of which this is the type, every tongue shall confess Jesus Lord, to *the glory of God the Father.*

These features give clear expression and character to the picture. But there is one other touch (the touch of a master's hand, I would reverently say) in this picture which is not inferior in meaning or in beauty to any. I mean, that in all this settlement of the earth, Asenath and the children get no portion. They are not seen; there is no mention of them even. Jacob may get Goshen; but Asenath, Ephraim, and Manasseh, nothing. Is it that the wife and children were loved less, and the father and brethren more? Nay, that cannot be. But Asenath and the children are heavenly, and have their portion, the rather in and with him who is the lord and dispenser of all this, and they cannot mingle in the interests and arrangements of the earth. Even Goshen, the fairest and fattest of the land, is unworthy of them. They are the family of the lord himself. They share the home, and the presence, and the closest endearments of him who is the happy and honoured head of all this scene of glory.

Is not this the great result, in miniature or in type? Have we not in all this that promised "dispensation of the fulness of times," when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven; and which are on earth? Are not the heavens and the earth here seen and heard together in their millennial order? I surely judge that they are. "Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world."

But as we go on in the course of the divine dispensations, earthly and heavenly scenes and purposes still unfold themselves. Israel, in their turn, and after these scenes in the hook of Genesis, become the witness of God, and an *earthly* people. A portion of the world is sanctified for God's possession and dwelling-place again. As the deluge had purified the whole of it for the divine power and presence in Noah's day, so the sword of Joshua now purifies a portion of it for the same divine power and presence in Israel. God has His sanctuary and His throne in the land of Canaan. He is worshipped in Jerusalem, and there His law is dispensed. The glory is again in the earth. As Lord of the earth, the God of Israel keeps court and rule on the earth again. But all is corrupted again. Canaan was defiled by the apostasy of Israel, as the Noah-earth had been defiled by the tower of Babel. Ezekiel, who was set as a watchman in the day of this apostasy, sees therefore the glory on its way from Jerusalem to *heaven.* It does not seek any other spot

on earth, but, being disturbed at Jerusalem by the defilements there, it retreats to heaven. Ezekiel xi.

Up to this day of Ezekiel the glory had communicated with Israel *in power*. It was a glory, or divine presence, that had judged Egypt, guided the camp through the desert, smitten the nations of Canaan, divided their land among the tribes, and then seated itself in the temple and on the throne at Jerusalem. All this was the glory *in power*. But, as we have seen, Israel had now forfeited it, and it returns to heaven. But it had another character in which to show itself. This same glory, or the divine presence, God Himself, returns veiled in the person of Jesus; in whom, as a rejected Galilean, or carpenter's son, having not where to lay His head, worse off in the world than the birds or the foxes, it went about in the land of Israel in fullest grace, healing, preaching, toiling, watching; poor, yet enriching others; thirsty and hungry, yet feeding thousands, and in every thing as simply and surely declaring itself to be the glory, as it did when it divided the waters of Jordan, or threw down the walls of Jericho. Only it was the glory in its *grace* now, as it had been the glory in its *power* then. In this form, however, Israel, or the earth, forfeited it also, though it did not leave the earth in the same way. Of old, when rejected in its power, it left the earth of itself, in righteous anger resenting the affront done to its majesty, and withdrawing itself in judgment (Ezek. i.-xi.); but now, being rejected in its grace, it is at last rather sent away than withdraws itself. But still, whether we see the glory in power or in grace, the earth has forfeited it, and it is now hid in the heavens. See Acts vii. 55.

This is the history of the glory since Ezekiel xi. to the ascension of Jesus. And it is again where the prophet of God saw it going in that chapter, that is, in heaven. Only it is now gathering the fulness of the Gentiles there, receiving to itself the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." The Holy Ghost has come forth to tell us here of the glory there, to form us into association with its own wondrous history, or to make its portion our portion.

Such is the place, and such the action, of the glory now.

But there is another stage in its history still. Ezekiel sees it return to the very spot from whence it set out. Ezekiel xliii. It had never sought any other place on earth. If Zion be unprepared for Jesus, the earth must lose Him, for of Zion alone has He said, "This is my rest for ever." But the glory does return, as we see in that chapter of Ezekiel. And then will arise that system commonly known by the name of "the millennium," when Jesus will become the centre, the true ladder which Jacob saw, the sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth, reconciling all by His blood, and then gathering all in Himself to spread His glories over all. See Isaiah iv. 5, 6.

Thus the two parts of the future kingdom, the heavenly and the earthly, have been pledged again and again from the beginning; one witness after another,

called forth in the dispensations, has, as we have seen, been telling of His counsels; and the millennium will be the owning of these pledges, and the accomplishment of the promises of these heavenly and earthly witnesses.

It has been grateful to my own soul to think of the *intercourse* of heaven with earth, in the progress of this varied and wondrous history. I mean in the visions, or the dreams, or the angelic visits, which at times the people of God have enjoyed. The audiences of divine oracles are of this character also. All these show that the heavens had access to the earth, and had but to pass through a thin veil to meet or reach it.

While the earth was undefiled, the Lord God walked in the garden. And afterwards, though He was in some sense estranged from earth, yet He was ever ready to visit it in the behalf of His elect, as in the histories of Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, and others. The ladder which Jacob saw, with its top in heaven and its foot on the earth; the passing and repassing of Moses in and out between the Lord and the people; the elders going up and seeing the God of Israel; Solomon's ascent from his own house up to the house of the Lord, these are notices of intercourse between the heavens and the earth in the days of the kingdom. So that bright and memorable hour, when Jesus was transfigured, in company with Moses and Elias, in the sight of Peter, James, and John. So the occasional appearances of Christ to His disciples after He had risen. And so the vision of the descending and ascending sheet. The heavenly things at such moments unfold themselves to the eye of man, and give sweet notice of their nearness to us. We do not as yet perceive this nearness, for the glory is not yet in its millennial place over the city of the Jews; but faith reads these notices of this nearness, and understands them. Isaiah iv. Faith, in Elisha, knew that the Lord of hosts was nigh, and he prayed that his servant might have his eye opened to see that the mountains around him were filled with the chariots and horses of heaven; and in the millennial kingdom all this will be to sight. The heavenly glory, or glory of the golden city, will shine over the Jerusalem of the land of Israel. On all her habitations it will be a covering. The ladder will be erected, with its head in the heavens and its foot on the earth; the same blessed Lord will be the centre of all things; and, as in the different parts of one temple, the services of praise and joy will be celebrated, every tongue confessing Jesus Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The *pure moral happiness* that will be enjoyed by reason of this intercourse, is also sweetly pictured in different types and prophecies. As at the meeting of Jethro and Moses, of Solomon and the Queen of the South; as in Isaiah lx., or on the holy Mount, or in the holy Jerusalem. What right affections do we find in all these intercourses! What pure social pleasures are, as I have said, pictured before us! At the mount of God how naturally Moses at once takes the place of the inferior, and Aaron too; and how gracefully Jethro, representing the heavenly

man, fills the duties and wears the honours of their superior! And with what joy of heart, and praise on his lips, does he listen to the tale of God's mercies to Israel! In the Queen of the South what unenvious and ungrudging generosity of soul we witness, and in Solomon what readiness to make her happy! He tells her all that was in her heart, and more besides, filling her with such light and joy, that, it is said, there was no more spirit in her; and she returns home, not to envy his greatness, but to spread the report of it. From Isaiah lx. we learn how gladly will all the nations, in the day of the kingdom, wait on Jerusalem with their treasures. Even like the flight of doves to their windows will be the willing-hearted journeys of the dromedaries of Midian, or the voyages of the ships of Tarshish, with their treasures and their spoils, to nourish the joy and glory of Zion. They will delight to do her honour, and all will be with the glow and fervency of a free-will offering. As afterwards, in the case of Peter on the holy Mount; when he awoke to the sight and sense of the heavenly glory, such joy filled his soul as, at once, and by its own necessity, expelled all selfishness from his heart. It was not Peter properly who spoke, but the virtue of the place, the spirit of the scene. He was, as in the twinkling of an eye, so filled with the air and breath of heaven, that he was ready to labour and let other men enter into his labours. "Master, it is good for us to be here," said he; "let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." And, again, in the holy Jerusalem, what is the commerce there between the families of God? All that is most blessedly of the same great and generous character. The kings bring their glory and honour up to the light of the city, counting it their place and their joy to do her honour, not lightly approaching her, but, as owning her holy dignity, bringing *only their glory and their honour* up to her. And she dispenses her treasures with the same gracefulness. The leaves of her tree, the light of her glory, the streams of her living river, are all at the welcome disposal of the nations.

All these shadowy expressions of the social delights of millennial days will be deeply prized by us, if we love the exercise of pure, unselfish affections.

But in this intercourse it is the heavens that will visit the earth, and not the earth the heavens--the people of the one will come down to the other, but not the contrary--the people of the earth will only have to receive and welcome the visitants from heaven.

The kingdom of nature, as we may call it, exhibits this. For the earth gives nothing to heaven, but receives from it; as the sunshine and the rain come down to bless the earth, but the earth adds nothing in return.[37]

[37]The saints of the present age, being heavenly in their calling, should be heavenly also in the spirit of their mind, and consciously, in all their tastes and desires, only as strangers, and not at home, in the earth; a people, as another once said, not as looking up from earth to heaven, but as looking down from heaven to earth.

But in this coming intercourse of the heavens and the earth, when the people of the heavens go up and down the mystic or millennial ladder, I have thought that Scripture leads us to judge that there will be change of raiment, or a certain veiling of their proper glory, when they come down, and have communion with the earth beneath them and under them.

The expression of this we get in the Lord's appearances after He rose from the dead. For then He could assume any veil which suited the business He had to do, whether that of the gardener to Mary, that of a travelling companion to the two going to Emmaus, or that of a courteous stranger on the banks of the lake to the fishermen. In such appearances He could not be seen in heaven; but He could thus veil Himself when the business He had in hand to do on the earth required it. As of old, Moses was the unveiled Moses in the presence of God, but the veiled Moses in the sight of Aaron and the congregation. One suit of raiment was fitted to heaven, another to earth. And as also, in the case of the priests, they had such apparel as became them when they were *within*, and they had another dress wherein to appear *without*. They suited themselves differently to the presence of God and the people. See Lev. vi. 11; xvi. 4, 23, 24; Ezek. xlii. 14; xiv. 19.

And, besides, we see this changeful appearance of the Son of God in old times. He had various suits wherein to show Himself, and wherein to veil the brighter glory which was fit only to the higher regions. He was in a burning bush at Horeb, in a cloudy chariot through the wilderness, and as an armed soldier under the walls of Jericho. Joshua v. 13. The business of the kingdom, the concerns of the earth, called Him here; and He appeared in a way suited to the business He had to do. And all these are notices of the change of raiment, in which those who are to govern "the world to come," and to do the matters of the kingdom on earth, may wait on their ministry here, and then return to appear again unveiled in their more proper heavenly places.

But in addition to this doctrine of heavenly and earthly places and peoples, in the days of the coming glory, and in addition to the truth of there being blessed and wondrous intercourse between them, as I have been shortly stating, we might meditate on some of the joys and glories *peculiar* to each of them.

To rise and meet the Lord in the air is the hope which is the most immediately upon the heart of the believer. Then the going with Him to the mansions in the Father's house. As He says, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And that house will give exercise to all those family affections which the heart so well understands. The Father will be there, and the First-born among many brethren, and the many brethren themselves. And to extend these relationships, and awaken affections to the full, there will be the marriage there, and the now espoused or betrothed Church will become the bride of the Lamb. Rev. xix.

There are scenes of glory also, and occasions of other joy, accompanying this. In those heavens there will be the "Holy Jerusalem," the dwelling of the saints as a royal priestly people, the place of *government* and of *worship*. And there will be the Tree of Life, and the River of Life, and the Light, and the Throne of God and the Lamb. And the saints will be there as harpers, not having cymbals and timbrels of merely *human* skill, fitted to raise the joys of earth (Ps. xcviii.), but having "harps of God," instruments of divine workmanship, fitted to awaken melody worthy of heaven itself. And the enthroned elders will be there, casting their crowns before the throne, and the angels delighting to ascribe all power and authority to the Lamb that was slain.[38]

And throughout all this there will be nothing to trouble or to hinder. As on earth, in those days, "nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain," so, in the heavens, there will be no entrance to anything defiling. There can be no enemies, for they have been judged; no serpent, for he has been trodden under foot. There will be no weariness of heart, no coldness or dulness of soul, no fainting of spirit; but the servants will serve without fault, and night and day there will be the happy worship, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

This heaven too will be one scene of God's own rest or sabbath; and the saints, in their measure tasting the same refreshing, will dwell in that rest in bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. They shall be like Him in His glory, seeing Him as He is. They shall shine "as the sun" in the kingdom of their Father. In mind, body, and estate they will be conformed to the Beloved. And there will be the seeing or understanding of all the precious revelation of God, not as through a glass, darkly, but as face to face, knowing even as we are known. And there will be the white stone; the hidden manna; the morning star; the white robes, wherein to stand before the throne of God; the white garments, wherein to walk with the Lord through the dominions; and the white raiment, wherein to sit on their own thrones. Rev. ii. iii. All these will be ours then.

But this leads to a scripture which is very fruitful in notices of heavenly joy and glory. I mean Rev. ii. iii. The promises there made will be found, I believe, to unroll before us, in holy and exact order, the things which await the saints of the heavens in those coming days.

Ephesus.--"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Those outside shall have the *leaves* of this same tree for healing (Rev. xxii.), but the saints of the heavens shall have more--the very fruit of the tree itself, gathered, as it were, immediately from it, where it grows in the midst of God's

[38]Another once observed, that the moment of highest rapture in heaven is not when the saints *wear* their crowns, but when they *cast them down* before the throne. Rev. iv. 10.

own garden; not the fruit brought to them, but gathered by their own hands off the very tree. Strong intimation of the freshness, the constant freshness, of that life which is theirs. As Jesus says (and what can pass beyond such words?), "Because I live, ye shall live also." Here, in this promise to Ephesus, is the tree of life partaken of immediately by the heavenly saints. For this is their portion, to receive life from the very fountains and roots themselves, and there also to feed and to nourish it.

Smyrna.--"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

This is something beyond what had been said to Ephesus. Life was regarded as *imparted* in its richest form to Ephesus; but here we see it *gained* by Smyrna. For Smyrna was sorely tried. Some were cast into prison, and all of them were in tribulation. They were to suffer many things, but they are promised, on being faithful unto death, a *crown* of life. As James in like manner speaks, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." Here the crown of life is promised to them who endure trial. And this is beautiful in its season. The Lord delights to own the faith of His saints; and if they have shown that they loved not their life in this world unto death, it shall be as though they had gained it in the world to come. Life shall be a crown to them *there*, as the glorious reward of their not having cared for it *here*.

Pergamos.--"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

We have another source of joy disclosed here. *Life* is possessed, and that abundantly and honourably, as we saw, at Ephesus and Smyrna; but there is here the promise of another joy--*the sense of the Lord's personal favour and affection*; communion with Him of such kind as is known only by hearts closely knit together in those delights and remembrances with which a stranger could not intermeddle. This is here spoken of to the faithful remnant in Pergamos. They had held His faith in the midst of difficulties, and clung to His name; and this should be rewarded with that which is ever most precious--tokens of personal affection, waking the delightful sense and assurance that the heart of the Lord is knit to their heart. He will kiss the saint "with the kisses of His mouth;" or, in the midst of it all, give that pledge which shall speak it. It is the *hidden* manna which is here fed upon; and the stone here received has a name on it, which *none know but he who receives it.* This, as another has said, expresses individual affection. It is not public joy, but delight in the conscious possession of the Lord's love. How blessed a character of joy in the coming days is this! *Life* possessed in abundance and in honour we have already seen at Ephesus and Smyrna; but here, at Pergamos, we advance to another possession--not *glory* in any form of it as yet, but the blessed

certainty and consciousness of the Lord's *personal affection.*

THYATIRA.--"He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of My Father; and I will give him the morning star."

Here we reach *public scenes, scenes of power and glory.* This is not merely life, though enjoyed never so blessedly, nor simple personal affection and individual joy, but here is something displayed in honour and strength abroad; here are power and glory in the first character in which the glories of the saints are destined hereafter to be unfolded; *i.e.*, in their being the companions of the Lord in the day when He comes forth to make His enemies His footstool; or, according to the decree of the second psalm, to break them with a rod of iron, to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be His power just as He takes the kingdom. This will be His ridding out all that would have been inconsistent with the kingdom. This will be the girding of the sword upon the thigh, like David, ere the throne be ascended, like Solomon. Psalm xlv. It will be the Rider's action, ere the reign of the thousand years begins. Rev. xix. And in that exercise of power, and display of glory, the saints (as we are here instructed and promised) shall be with Him. This is blessed in its place, and given to us in due season; for, *after the life*, and the *personal, hidden joy*, the *public glories* begin to be ushered forth.

SARDIS.--"They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

This is a stage onward in the scenes of glory. The vengeance has been taken, the sword of Him who sits on the white horse has done its righteous service, the vessels of the potter have been broken, and the kingdom has come. Jesus here promises to His faithful ones that He will confess them before His Father and His angels. This is not redeeming them from judgment, or saving their souls (as we speak), but *publicly owning them before the assembled dignities of the kingdom.* He promises them that they shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. That hand which now in grace washes their feet, will then take hold of them in holy, happy intimacy, and own full companionship with them in the realms of glory. They shall *walk* with Him.

What a character of joy is this! To be *publicly* owned, as before (as we read of Pergamos) privately and personally caressed. In how many ways does the Spirit of God trace the coming joy of the saints! The life, the love, the glory, that are reserved for them; the tree of life, and its crown too; the white stone, carrying to the deepest senses of the heart the pledge of love; and then companionship with the King of glory in His walks abroad through His bright and happy dominions.

But even more than this the same Spirit has still to tell.

Philadelphia.—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name."

We have just seen the heir of the kingdom as the companion of the Lord of the kingdom, abroad in the light of the glory, walking there in white with Him, owned before the Father and before the angels. Here the promise is, that *the faithful one shall have his place in the system of glory itself*, that he shall be of that glorious order of kings and priests who shall then form the character of the scene, each of them being a pillar in the temple, and each enrolled as of the city High and holy dignities! Each of the faithful ones filling his place in the temple and the city, a needed member of that royal priesthood then established in their holy government in the heavens, where the New Jerusalem abides and shines. What honour is put on them here! Owned *abroad* in companionship with the Lord, walking through the rich and wide scene of glory; and also owned *within*, as bearing, each in himself, a part of the glory, every vessel needed to the full expression of the light of the New Jerusalem, and formed as the vital part of the fulness of Him who is to fill all in all! A king and a priest, each of them occupying his several rank and station in the temple and the city, the Salem of the true Melchisedec. What a place of dignity! Surely love delights to show what it can do, and will do. If we had but hearts to prize these things, chiefly because of their telling us of this love which has thus counselled for us! For what higher, happier thought can we have, even of glory itself, than that it is the manner in which love lets us know what it will do for its elect one. Poor, poor *heart* that moves so little at these things, while the *mind* stirs the conception of them!

Laodicea.—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Here *the highest point of glory is reached.* This is the bright and sunny elevation up to which this passage through the joys and honours of the kingdom has conducted us. Here the faithful one enters into the joy of his Lord, sharing His throne; not only owned by Him abroad, and established with Him within, walking in white with Him, or fixed as a needed and honoured portion of the great system of royal priesthood, but with Him seated in the supreme place.

These pledges and promises may now end. They have told of blessedness indeed.

Exceeding great things have surely passed before us in this wondrous scripture, Rev. ii. iii. The tree and crown of life—the white stone—the morning star—the walking abroad with Jesus through the realms—residence in the temple and city—a place on the throne itself! Surely, if Jesus Himself be prized, then will all

this be welcomed by us. And then, as we are further told, the joy of dispensing to the earth the streams of that living river, and the leaves of that living tree, which rises and grows in our heavens (Rev. xxii.); with access, moreover, to the ladder which lies between the upper and lower regions, in order, as I have been already observing, to do the business of the kingdom, in conscious royal dignity, and full priestly holiness.

The glory also shall be revealed *in* us, each saint shall bear it or be a vessel of it, and each of them shall be a child of light and a child of the day, and each a son of glory, glorified together with Christ, so as to join with Him in shedding light, beyond that of the sun or the moon, upon the creation beneath, that the present earnest expectation of that creation may be satisfied in the then "manifestation of the sons of God."

"And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." They shall be intimately near Him, speaking face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend, without fear or suspicion, for their title shall be signed and sealed as with His own hand. He will have appropriated them to Himself; and this they shall know, because His name shall be on them. And there, as within all veils, they will walk in their heavenly temple, and look on their Lord, and love, and wonder.

And to all this, we may add, that everything will be according to our mind, as we speak; all will be right in our eyes; all will equally and entirely please us, and be just as we would have it. This we see in the book of Revelation, in the progress of which the heavenly family, wherever they are seen or heard, are always found in the fullest concord with the action that is going on. In chap. iv. the throne is getting itself ready for judgment—-lightnings, thunders, and voices proceeding from it; but the elders and the living creatures have their doxologies to the name of the Lord God Almighty, who sits and orders all. In chap. v. the Lamb takes the book, and they again rejoice, taking their harps to celebrate Him, and to make merry at the prospect which this sight opens to them. In chap. xi. the seventh angel announces judgment, but they have only to fall on their faces, and worship, and give thanks. In chap. xii. the war in heaven and its issue is just as they would have it; and with a loud voice they publish "Salvation!" In chap. xv. God's *works and ways*, all things of His *counsel* or His *strength*, form the theme of their song. And in chap. xix. the judgment of the woman who corrupted the earth calls forth again and again the hallelujah of the glorified family. Thus all, from beginning to end, is equally and altogether right in their eyes; all is exactly as they would have it. They as loudly triumph in the Kinsman *Avenger* (chap. xix.), as they do in the Kinsman *Redeemer*. Chap. v. Everything is to them beautiful in its season. The marriage of the Lamb, and the judgment of the great whore, are equally and

entirely according to their mind.

Different, far different indeed, from what is now felt by the believer. As far as he is spiritual, nothing is fully right around him here. And this is only increasingly so, as the world gets fuller of its own inventions, and increases with the increase of man. And a judgment this affords as to the state of our affections. For we may ask ourselves, How are we moved by the present advance in the improvements of the world? Are we congratulating ourselves and the age upon them, or are they sickening to our hearts? This may be a touch-stone of the condition of our souls, whether indeed Christ be our object or not. The great tower in the plains of Shinar would have been the boast of a Nimrod, but Abram would have turned from it to weep. Just as the merchants of the earth bewail that which the heavens rejoice over. Rev. xviii.

And this is the great inquiry for us now-—Is Christ the object of our hearts—the One that we long for? For that He will be ours, and near us and with us for ever, will be the highest point in all our rich happiness in this future heaven which we have been looking at. Provision for the *heart* is always the dearest thought we can entertain. As with Adam at the beginning. He was put into the possession of a goodly estate, which carried with it all that could gratify the sense. There were the trees and the fruits of that garden, pleasant to the eye and to the palate. The desire of the one and of the other, and of all the senses and faculties of man, might be *holily* indulged, for the tree of knowledge had not been then eaten. The Lord God was in the supreme place, the creature was not then worshipped and served more than the Creator, and all the senses might righteously take their enjoyments, and the divine Planter of Eden had provided for them. Gen. ii. 9. Yea, and more than this. Adam received *dominion* from the same hand. The natural--nay, the divine--delight in power and dignity was thus provided for; for as the Lord God in the upper world called the stars by their names, thus owning them, so did He give Adam on the earth to call the cattle and the fowl by their names, thus taking headship of them. And in this way he was set in the midst of these divine provisions for his eye, his ear, his tastes, and his desire of dignity. But the heart was as yet unfed. The day of his *coronation* was not the day of his *espousals*. And the Lord God knows him. He knows the creature whom in His love and perfections He had formed. It is not good, says He, that he should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him. And Adam receives Eve from the same hand which had given him Eden with its fruits, and dominion in the earth. And then it is that his lips are opened. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh," says Adam, expressing his deep satisfaction, and that he now needed no more. Eden could not, with all its delights for the senses, nor could his vast and unrivalled dominion abroad, as "monarch of all he surveyed," do what Eve did for him. She unsealed his lips with

a confession that *now* he was satisfied. And so with us in possessing Jesus, above all glory, in our heavenly Eden, for ever.

These, and the like notices of heaven scattered through the Word, it is blessed to take up and ponder. And, as one has said, "The Holy Ghost, who is called the earnest of our inheritance, acts upon these notices, and makes them living to our souls." And it is these notices and attractions which make us, in a divine sense, strangers and pilgrims here. Abraham, it has been observed, became a stranger in the earth, not from any sorrow or pressure in Mesopotamia, for we read of none such, but because "the God of glory" had spoken in the language of "promise" to him. He was drawn out from kindred and home and country by something before him, and not urged or driven out by anything behind. This was heavenly strangership here.

Is it thus, beloved, or are we desiring that it may be thus, with our souls? Are we pondering the prospect, and following out the distant glimpses of it, with fixed and interested hearts? These are the present questions for the stirring and guiding of our souls. The search will lead to humbling and rebuke, but it will be an excellent oil.

And, as if to give us full ease of heart in the enjoyment of this our future heaven, the Lord has taught us to know that we are in some sense *wanted* there, however unimportant we may deem ourselves. For each is to be a vessel of the glory, as we have already said; of larger or smaller quantity it may be, but still each is a *needed* vessel in that house of glory. We commonly think how necessary the Lord is to us. True indeed. We shall celebrate the fact that we owe everything to Him throughout eternity. But it is also a truth (to the praise of the riches of grace be it spoken) that we are necessary to Him. "The woman is the glory of the man." Not in the same way, surely. He is necessary to us for *life* as well as for joy, for *salvation* as well as for glory; but we are important, of course, only to His joy and glory; as it is written, "That we should be to the praise of His glory;" and again, "That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Eph. ii 7.

The Lord God consulted for Adam's joy when He purposed in Himself to form Eve. Eve, we may know full well, was abundantly happy in Adam; but still the concern of the Lord was about Adam being happy in Eve. So it is even now in the dispensation of the Gospel. The true Adam is still consulted for. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his *son*." And so will it be still in the dispensation or age of the glory. It is called "the marriage of the Lamb"--not, as once observed to me, the marriage of the Church or of the Lamb's wife, but *of the Lamb*, as though *the Lamb* were the One chiefly interested in that joy.

And so it is. The Church will have her joy in Christ, but Christ will have

His greater joy in the Church. The strongest pulse of gladness that is to beat for eternity will be in the bosom of the Lord over His ransomed Bride. In all things He is to have the pre-eminence; and, as in all things, so in this--that His joy in her will be greater than hers in Him.

And all the foreknown to that end, and none less than *all*, will form the Eve of that Adam, and be the Bride or the Woman destined thus to be the Man's joy and glory. *All* here are *now* "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," and no less *then* will the *all* be demanded. Oh, how the Lord not only prepares the heaven, but in this way prepares the heart for it, that we may enjoy it with *entire ease*, seeing ourselves a needed portion of the holy furniture of the place! As Joseph would comfort his brethren by telling them that it was God who had sent him into Egypt before them, that life might be preserved by a great deliverance. Their wicked hands had done it, it is true; but God's purpose had done it also, and it is this He would have them now think of, and not the other. For this is the way of love; and "God is love." Love will not only spread the feast, but do what it can to let it be tasted with all confidence and joy of heart. Love will make the guests *sit* at the table, give them a plentiful board, and ease while enjoying it.

Can we, beloved, read these notices of the heaven that is to be ours by-and-by, and for ever, and, as we read, wish our hearts joy that it is so? Can we count ourselves happy, having such prospects as these? As the miser can bear the scorn of the world without, in the thought of his treasures at home, can we in the hope of this joy of heaven live above the earth and its promises?

Such things, however, as these, excellent as they are, have something still further with them. The *air* of a place is more important to us than its *scenery*. If we can get both, of course the better; but if we can have but one, the good air will be surely preferred.

Now, heaven, I may say, will have both. It will be filled with a moral element or atmosphere, as well as furnished with glories; and the former (I speak as a man) will be more in the account of our joy than the latter.

I have found it well at times to ponder this, and to learn something of that moral element that is to be the air of heaven. Scriptures which I have already noticed test and prove the purity of that air. The millennial atmosphere both in heaven and on earth will indeed be ever fresh, laden with balmy fragrance. If we are now wearied with our own selfishness, and with the tempers of "hateful and hating" human nature, we must long for a change of air, such as the land of the glory is said to know, the land of the voice of the turtle. If the brightness of those regions, or the scenery of the place, have its attraction (and what heart can conceive it?), what must be the atmosphere of it to our happy souls, where social life, through all its relations, as between heaven and earth, and as between Jerusalem,

the land of Israel, and the most distant islands, moves and kindles continually with the most generous and delicate affections.

It is not that nature will be triumphed over merely; nature will not be there; at least, not in the heavens which we are approaching. We shall not have to speak of saints carrying themselves towards each other in a good spirit. Such security is well in its place, and while we sojourn in our "vile bodies." But there the element itself will be good. The fervent currents of pure and happy minds, flowing from each to all, will form it.

The moral dignity and beauty, the various and yet consistent perfections that will animate us then, will all be bright and lovely before the divine mind. God shall survey the work of His fingers through the different spheres of glory, and rest with delight in it.

It is a thought much to be cherished, that our eternal ways will thus be the divine delight, and more than make up to God (I speak again after the manner of men) for the grief which, by us and in us, His Spirit is now so continually put to.

Such will be the *moral* enjoyments in the realms of glory; no small part of that banquet at which the Lord will seat His guests, when He comes forth and girds Himself to wait upon them. Luke xii. 37. We may be but little able to comprehend the glory itself, but we can appreciate these moral characteristics of the heaven we are reaching.

While still here, in the conflicts of flesh and spirit, we are, in some sense, under the guardianship of *conscience*, that principle which judges of "good and evil." But conscience will not keep heaven in order. Our *passions* and our *righteousness* will there be one. Little do we now advance in a heavenly direction by the gracious current of affections. But what bliss, when the very energy which bears us *speedily* will also bear us *rightly* onward—-when the very gale which fills the sails will regulate the rudder; the passion that engages and delights the soul being the very rule and measure of all that is worthy of the presence of God!

May we cherish in our souls these notices of heaven! Faint is their impression; humblingly indeed do some of us know this; but we may entertain them, and bid them welcome, grieved that our welcome is not more warm and affectionate.

But the earth is still remembered, and kept in store for great purposes yet to be accomplished. The rainbow was, of old, as we know, made the pledge of this. It is a token of the covenant between God and all the earth, and every living thing upon it. The Lord says, that when the cloud comes, the bow shall be with it—-when the portent of judgment lowers, the sign of peace shall shine. And, as we see to this day, the earth has not been again destroyed. It may not be the residence of the glory, as it once was, and as it will be again, but still it is preserved, according to

the promise of the rainbow. And Scripture is diligent and exact to show us, that in every variety of the divine procedure, this promise has been, is, and will be remembered.

Thus it was surely remembered all the time the Lord had His seat in Zion; for then the Lord made the earth His habitation. But when the throne of the Lord leaves Zion, and the holiest of holies loses the glory, because the earthly people had, by their sin, disturbed its rest, and all returns to heaven (Ezek. i-xi.), we see the throne and the glory carrying the rainbow with them. That is, though the earth was then stripped of glory; though Jerusalem, the throne of the Lord, was then for a season laid on heaps, and put under the foot of the Gentiles; still the Lord would be mindful of the earth, and make it the object of His faithful care, according to His promise. And thus we see the glory, though it leave the earth, bearing with it the remembrance of the earth: *the rainbow accompanies it to heaven*; this telling us, that though the Lord leave the earth as the scene of His power and praise for a time, He has it still in recollection before Him. Accordingly, when the heaven is opened to our vision in Rev. iv. we see the faithful bow encompassing the throne there. How blessed this is! The Lord in the heavens is still mindful of the earth. He has thrown the very pledge of its security around His throne on high, so that though the earth see not that throne, and is no longer the place of that throne, that throne sees the earth and remembers it, and longs, as it were, for its natural footstool.

This shows us the security of the earth during this heavenly dispensation through which we are now passing. The Lord is now gathering a people *for heaven*. It is true, He is not filling the earth with glory yet, but gathering an elect family out from it, to have communion with Himself in heaven; but still He is mindful of His promise. He looks on the bow, and preserves the earth, keeps the seed-time and the harvest, the cold and the heat, the day and the night, the summer and the winter, in their stated rounds and seasons. Gen. ix.

How simple all this is. When the throne went first from earth to heaven, we saw it bearing along with it the recollection of the earth; and now in its place in the heavens we see it still clasping to its breast and encircling across its brow this fond and loved token of the earth's blessing. Ezek. i.; Rev. iv.

But there is still more. For let the Lord come down in the judgments that are by-and-by to visit the earth, we shall find Him as fully mindful of His promise not to destroy it, as now He is, or has been hitherto. This we see in Rev. x. The mighty angel, the angel of judgment, comes down; and he is clothed with a cloud, the fearful vessel of wrath, and token of judgment; as was said at the beginning, "When I bring a cloud over the earth." But even then the rainbow is with Him; as it was added, "The bow shall be seen in the cloud." It is not simply with a cloud He comes down, but with the cloud and the bow accompanying it. See Gen. ix.

14; Rev. x. 1. As much as to tell us, that at the very end He remembers His word, and will debate with judgment. He will say to it, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." The cloud is to descend, it is true; the judgment must come, the vials of wrath must be poured out; but it is only to judge those who corrupt or destroy the earth, and not to destroy the earth itself; for the mighty angel, as we see from this scripture, who comes down "clothed with a cloud," has also "a rainbow upon his head." And the cloud, as it executes its commission, and pours out its water or its judgments again, must stay itself in obedience to the bow that is to measure and control it. The present course of things may cease, as in the days of Noah, but the bow shines in the eye of the Lord. His promise lives in His heart, and the earth shall be the happy scene and witness of its rich fulfilment.

Thus, then, we see that even the judgment itself shall not touch the ancient promise to the earth. It is still beloved for Noah's sake, of whom it was said, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed (Gen. v.), that is, for His blessed sake whom Noah typified; and we need not say, beloved, who He is. Therefore it survives the judgment, it stands the shock of the descent of this mighty angel, though clothed with a cloud, planting his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and crying aloud as when a lion roars.

And what is it reserved for? For even more than the rainbow had promised it. For this is the way of God. He takes up His pledges, and is faithful *abundantly*, doing more exceedingly than He had spoken. And so is it in this case of the earth. It is not only preserved, with its seed-time and its harvest, its day and its night, but it is brought into the "liberty of the glory of the sons of God." This is more than had been pledged to it. The holy city descends out of heaven, to take its connection with the earth; and, shining in due sphere above it, forth from its bosom it sends the leaves of its living tree, the streams of its living water, and the rays of its indwelling glory, to beautify and to refresh the earth and its creatures below. Rev. xxi, xxii. The rainbow need not now appear, for the cloud is gone. The bow would do well enough while there was the cloud, the promise and the pledge might comfort, while there was place for judgment, or for fear of evil; but now judgment is over. The cloud is scattered, and the bow has therefore no place. But the holy city descends out of heaven from God, to do more, much more, than merely to redeem the divine pledge. For it is glorifying, and not merely preserving, the creation. It shall then *rejoice* in the presence of the Lord, when He cometh to govern the earth.

Would not time fail to tell of all the types and prophecies of the *earth's* blessing in the days of the kingdom? The trees and the fields and the floods, in their order, will then rejoice before the Lord. The creation itself shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Psalm viii., with many a

kindred voice, proclaims it. The voice of every creature on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, heard in vision by the prophet, anticipates it. Rev. v. And the promised day, when "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," when "the leopard shall lie down with the kid," and when "the heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil," will realize it. Isaiah xxxv.; Hosea ii.

And *the nations*, we know, will fill their place in this approaching system of glory. They will turn their swords into ploughshares; and instead of learning war, they will learn the ways of the Lord, and walk in His paths. At the appointed season they will wait, each with his offering, on the King in Zion, holding their high and joyous feast in the presence of His greatness there. Then from the uttermost parts of the earth shall be heard songs to the Righteous One. And then shall the call of the prophet be answered by the willing hearts of all the people: "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands."

Israel then shall dwell safely--"every man under his vine and under his fig tree." They shall be "all righteous;" they shall be all united; they shall call every man his neighbour. "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." The two mystic sticks shall become one in the prophet's hand. They shall be "one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel." And, as in the shadowy days of Solomon, it shall then be said, "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry." Their merriment, too, shall be holy. It shall be the joy of a sanctuary. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness.... They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." Within themselves, towards the nations around, and under the God of their fathers, the God of their covenant, all shall be blessing with Israel. For thus saith the Lord God, They shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant.... I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall known that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. Ezekiel xxxvii.

All this tells the tale of millennial joys on the earth. But in this system, of earthly glory, beyond the *creation* itself, *the nations*, and *Israel*, there is a spot still

more illustrious, an object distinguished in the midst of even joys and dignities like these. I mean *Jerusalem.*

And I have before now asked myself, Why is it that Jerusalem is made so much of in Scripture? Why is it that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"?

It was *His* court--the place of His presence both as the God and the King of Israel. His palace and His sanctuary were there. The administrations of His laws and the ordinances of His worship were there. The thrones of judgment, the testimony of Israel, and the eucharistic service of His name, were all known there. Psalm cxxii. It was the place where Jehovah had recorded His name, and where the glory dwelt, the symbol of His presence.

It was *His home.* The whole land was the Lord's demesne; but Jerusalem was the mansion-house, the family dwelling. The children were placed out here and there through the tribes and divisions of the land, which was the family estate, but Jerusalem was the family mansion. It was the father's house, the common home, where, at stated holy days, the children met, according to the common way of the affection of kindred.

This, I believe, was Jerusalem's *first* attraction in the eye and to the heart of the Lord of Israel. He sought and He found a home at Jerusalem, saying, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." And He left it, when sin had defiled it, with all the hesitation and lingering which disappointed affection so well understands. Ezekiel viii.-xi.

Jerusalem was all this--the house of the Father, the palace of the King, and the temple of the God of Israel. For Israel were His children, His people, and His worshippers, and the affections of a Father's heart, and the joys and honours of the Lord and King, found their object and their sphere at Jerusalem. And this is more than enough to account to us for her high distinction. And all this is she to be again. It will be the palace, the temple, and the family mansion again. It will be the place of prayer for all nations. It will be the seat of legislation, worship, judgment, and government. It will be the fountain, too, of the virtues of the new covenant, from whence the living waters will flow, to make her, in those days, the mystic mother of the family. Psalm lxxxvii. And the glory of the heavens will shine on her from above, doing for her the service of sun and moon, while she is lifted up and exposed, that she may bask in the full light of it, and dwell under it as her native air. Isa. iv. 5; lx. 1; Zech. xiv. 10.

And she shall be the bride of the Lord of the earth, and the queen in the day of His power. He will clothe her with ornaments as such, rejoice over her, impart His name to her, and have her so honoured and cherished by the whole world, as to treat despite of her as indignity done to Himself. Psalm xlv.; Isaiah lx.; Jeremiah xxxiii.; Ezekiel xlviii.; Zeph. iii.

All this may well account for the place which Jerusalem holds in the thoughts of the Spirit. His prophets, those who spake as they were moved by Him, address her again and again as the bride, the queen, and the mother, in the days of the approaching glory. But what shall we say of Him, who has thus decked her with all beauty and dignity, and given her such relationship to Himself? Is it not wondrous and happy to see the circle of human sympathies thus seating itself in the divine mind? Is *friendship* only human? How can I say so, when I see Jesus and the disciple whom He loved walking in company? Are the affections of *kindred* merely human? How can I say so, when I think of Christ and the Church, and a thousand witnesses from Scripture? Is the heart's fond delight in *home* a divine as well as a human joy? How can I doubt it, when I thus see the Lord and Jerusalem? Surely the divine mind is the seat of all the pure and righteous sensibilities of the heart, and "the Man Christ Jesus" tells me so. The Lord God of Israel has known, and will know again, the affection that lingers round the homestead of many a family recollection and joy.

Such will be Jerusalem, and such the earth itself, the nations, and Israel, in the promised days of the presence and power of the Lord. Faintly traced by the hand, more feebly responded to by the heart. But "yet true," though "surpassing fable."

All Scripture, however, shows us that such joy cannot be had on earth, or in the circumstances and history of the world, in their *present* state, nor till the earth is made the scene of righteousness; and such it is not to be, till the Lord have ridded it of all that offends, and all that does iniquity. *The sword of judgment* must go before *the throne of glory*. The earth must be cleared of its corruptions, ere it can be a garden of holy, divine delights again.

The Gospel is not producing a happy world, or spreading out a garden of Eden. It proposes no such thing, but to take out of the world a people, a heavenly people, for Christ. But the presence of the Lord will make a happy world by-and-by, when that presence can righteously return to it.

The close of the Psalms shows us this. Beautiful close! All praise—-untiring, satisfying fruit of lips uttering the joy of a filled heart, and owning the undivided glory of the Blessed One! But this had been preceded by the sorrows of the righteous in an evil world, and then the judgment of that world. For that Book gives the cries of the righteous in an evil world, the joys of the Spirit in the midst of that evil, the varied exercises of the soul by the way, and the end of the righteous in the joy of praise. All, however, forbids the heart from entertaining the thought of joy *in the earth* till the judgment have cleansed it; the *rest* is to be prepared for *Solomon* by the *sword* of *David*.

The proper thought of this will keep the heart from being tossed by disappointments, and take it off from the expectation of any progress to rest and

stability for the world, or in it, till the Lord have executed judgment. Our joy now is to be in Himself, in spirit, in the thought of His love, and the sense of His peace, helped onward, day by day, in the hope of full and righteous joy with Him, when the wicked have gone from the scene for ever.

How sensitively does the Lord's mind recede from the thought of joy in the earth, when the people were wondering at all things that He did! Turning to His disciples He said, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." But this, I may say, was only a sample of all His mind, as He looked to the earth in its present condition. It was ever in His thoughts connected with trial.

Psalm lxxv. strikingly utters this. There Messiah looks on the earth as all dissolved and disordered, about to drink the cup of judgment at God's righteous hand. For the present He expected nothing from it. But then, after the exhausting of that cup, He does look on it as the scene of joy and praise and exaltation of righteousness, He Himself bearing up its pillars, and leading its songs.

I feel it, however, to be a very solemn truth, that God is allowing man, giving him space and time, to ripen his iniquity, that the judgment may fall upon him in the height of his pride, and crush the system which he is raising in its point of greatest pretension and advancement. It is surely a solemn truth. But even in such a purpose, as in all others, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." The believer may be awed by such a fact in the divine dealings with man, but he approves it, understands it to be a fitting thing, that man should be allowed to produce the fully ripened fruit of his own departure from God, to present it and survey it in the pride of his heart, and then receive his righteous answer to all his boasted and enjoyed apostasy, from the signal judgment of God. The iniquity of the Amorites was to be *full*, ere justice should overtake it. The Lord bore with Babel till the cry of it went up to Him. Nebuchadnezzar had built "great Babylon," as he gloried, by the might of his power, and for the honour of his majesty, when he was driven from his high estate; Haman was full when God emptied him even to the dregs. And the great man of the earth, at the last, shall come to his end, just as he has planted the tabernacles of his palaces in the glorious holy mountain.

It is solemn; but it is as wisdom would have it, and as faith deeply approves it. God is justified in His sayings, and overcomes when He is judged.

Happy I desire to find this meditation. Where there is much conflict of thought and judgment among the saints, it is grateful to the soul to turn to subjects of *common* interest and delight; and when the scene around is getting full of man's inventions and man's importance, it is well, to look to those regions of light and purity, where God, supreme and all-sufficient, will gather together all things in

Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Regions of light and purity indeed, where all will tell of intimacy or nearness, and yet of the full sense of the position of the Creator and the creature, the Sanctifier and the sanctified. In many a delightful page of God's Word is this brightly reflected. The Lord dwelt in the midst of the camp of Israel while at rest, and, as it took its journey, went along with it, whether by night or by day, whether the road lay right onward, or turned back to the mountain or the sea. But still He was *God*, the Lord of the camp.

How does all that commend itself to our souls! We bow to this. We rejoice to know that He dwells in a light that no man can approach unto, and yet that He has walked through the cities and villages of earth; that He is One whom no man hath seen, nor can see, and yet that none less than the One who is in His bosom has declared Him to us, been in the midst of us, our Kinsman in the flesh, as well as Jehovah's Fellow.

His supreme authority, as Lord, is infinite; His distance and holiness, as God, are infinite. And yet He is "Head over all things *to* the Church," and God Himself is "for us." At the very moment of His commanding Moses and Joshua to take their shoes from their feet, because of His presence, He was manifesting Himself to them in symbols or characters significant of the deepest sympathy, and of the most devoted service. Exodus iii; Joshua v.

But enough. I will not pursue these thoughts any further. Yet in the days of increasing gloom and perplexity, like the present, the soul is the more sent to the sure hiding-place of safety, or to the sunny Pisgah heights of hope and observation. It gets the more accustomed to meditate on the strength of those foundations which God has put under our feet-—the intimacy of that communion into which He has even now introduced our hearts-—and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes.

I only ask, beloved, Are we pressing, in desire, after this portion? Are we unsatisfied with all in comparison with it? Are we refusing to form any purpose, or to entertain any prospect, short of this? In Psalm lxxxiv. the heart of the worshipper is still *on the way*, unsatisfied, though he have "pools," and "rain," and "strength" of the Lord, till he reach Zion. In Psalm xc. all which the man of God sees is the vanity of human life and the "return" of the Lord. He does not anticipate changes and improvements in the condition of things, but looks to being "made glad" and of being "satisfied" at the "return" of Christ.

Is this our mind? I again ask. Are we still prisoners of hope, refusing to let anything change the expectant attitude of the soul? The Holy Ghost is given to us, not to change that, but to strengthen it. His very presence does but nourish present dissatisfaction of heart, and the longings of hope and desire. He causes the saint to "abound in hope," and gives breadth and compass to the cry, "Come, Lord

Jesus." Spirit of truth, the other Comforter, as He is, He does not show Himself for the Bridegroom, nor propose to make His refreshings "the marriage supper of the Lamb." The energy of hope, the desirings of the soul after our still unmanifested Lord, only speak the Spirit's presence in us the more clearly and blessedly. It is His very design and workmanship. He draws us forth to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And is He, beloved, our object? The heart well knows the power of that which is its object. Do we make Jesus such? Do we find, in ourselves, anything of that sickness of hope of which we read in Scripture? And are we able to say, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

May the Spirit shed abroad more and more, in the heart of each of us, these and the like affections. And to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever! Amen.

Bride of the Lamb! awake, awake!
Why sleep for sorrow now?
The hope of glory, Christ, is thine,
A child of glory thou.

Thy spirit through the lonely night,
From earthly joy apart,
Hath sigh'd for One that's far away,
The Bridegroom of thy heart.

But see, the night is waning fast,
The breaking morn is near,
And Jesus comes with voice of love,
Thy drooping heart to cheer.

He comes; for, oh, His yearning heart
No more can bear delay,
To scenes of full, unmingled joy
To call His Bride away.

This earth, the scene of all His woe,
A homeless wild to thee,
Full soon upon His heav'nly throne,
Its rightful King shall see.

Thou too shalt reign, He will not wear
His crown of joy alone,
And earth His royal Bride shall see
Beside Him on the throne.

Then weep no more, 'tis all thine own,
His crown, His joy divine,
And sweeter far than all beside,
He, He Himself is thine.

London: A. S. Rouse, 15 & 16, Paternoster Square, E.C.

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